



THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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NEW YORK, APRIL 15, 1904.

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THE LIBERTY BOYS' FIERCE FINISH; OR, HOLDING OUT TO THE END. *By HARRY MOORE.*



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(Continued on page 3 of cover.)

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OR,

HOLDING OUT TO THE END.

By **HARRY MOORE.**

CHAPTER I.

BACKWOODS RIVALS.

"Good afternoon."

"How do you do, sir?"

"Pretty cold to-day, isn't it?"

"Rather; especially for horseback riding."

"We are going the same way; if you don't object, we'll ride along together."

"I have no objections, sir; indeed, it will be more pleasant to have company."

"That is what I think."

It was about four o'clock of a cold day in January of the year 1777.

A young man nineteen years of age was riding along a road leading eastward, and at a point perhaps fifteen miles from New Brunswick, in New Jersey.

The youth was handsome, and was bronzed by exposure almost the hue of an Indian. His firm gray eyes and square jaws betokened him to be a youth of determination, while there was such a frank, honest and manly expression on his face that anyone was attracted to him at once. This youth was Dick Slater, who even at that time had succeeded in making himself famous both as a scout and spy in the patriot army, and as captain of a company of youths known as "The Liberty Boys of '76."

He was mounted on a coal-black horse, a magnificent animal of undoubted Arabian stock, and he wore the costume of a civilian.

At the time of which we write the patriot army, under General Washington, was stationed at Morristown Heights.

The British army was quartered at New Brunswick, and as it was very cold the armies were simply sitting still, so to speak, and doing nothing.

General Washington was a shrewd general, however, and always made it a rule to keep informed regarding his enemy's plans and intentions, if such a thing were possible, and he had sent Dick to make the attempt to enter New Brunswick and acquire some information that might be of value.

Dick had set out, and when he was about half way to New Brunswick a man of about thirty years had ridden out of a cross-road and joined him, whereupon the above conversation had ensued.

"What is your name?" the stranger asked.

"Dave Tott," replied Dick.

He thought it best to give a fictitious name, for the stranger might be a Tory, and might have heard of him under the name of Dick Slater.

"My names's Harbison—George Harbison. I am on my way to New Brunswick. Where are you headed for, if it is a fair question?"

"I am going to New Brunswick."

"Good! We will travel along together."

Dick was not sure that he liked the arrangement; but he could not very well object, so said, with a show of pleasure:

"Very well, Mr. Harbison."

They rode along in silence for a few moments, and then the man said:

"I suppose that you are a subject of the king?"

"Oh, yes," replied Dick; "otherwise I would not be going to New Brunswick."

"It is the same with me."

There was nearly two feet of snow on the ground, and as in many places the road had not been broken at all it was hard work for the horses to make their way along. Progress was slow.

"We will not be able to reach New Brunswick to-night," said Harbison.

"No; the roads are so bad on account of the snow."

"And the days are so short."

"Yes, it will soon be dark."

"We will have to look out for a place to stop over-night."

"True; we may come upon a house presently."

"I hope so. My horse is tired, and I am tired, hungry and cold."

"It is the same with me."

The sun went down presently, and as they were in heavy timber it began to grow dark quickly. The snow, however, would keep it from being excessively dark.

"We will stop at the first house we come to," said Harbison.

"So we will."

They rode on and on, and did not come to any house, and they began to think that they would have to stay out all night."

"This country is not settled very thickly," said Harbison.

"You are right, sir; perhaps we may come to a house soon."

Presently they came to a point where a narrow, winding road left the main road and penetrated into the timber.

Harbison called attention to this.

"The chances are good that the lane leads to a house," he said; "what do you say to following it?"

"I am willing."

They rode onward perhaps half a mile, and then came to a good-sized clearing.

Cordwood was stacked up on every hand, and it was evident that somebody was at work clearing up a tract of land for cultivation.

The cabin was in sight at the farther side of the clearing, and the two rode to it.

They saw a shed around behind the cabin, and this would answer as a shelter for the horses.

There was a light shining through the window of the cabin, and Dick leaped down and knocked at the door.

Voices had been heard, but now all was silence for a few moments, after which there came the sound of footsteps, and the door was opened, revealing a rough looking man of perhaps forty years. He was dressed in rough, homespun clothing, and his face was almost covered by heavy whiskers.

"How do you do?" said Dick.

"Howdy, strangers," was the reply, with a peering glance at Dick and his companion, who was still seated on the back of his horse.

"What would be the chance to stay overnight with you?"

The man hesitated an instant, and then said:

"Yer welcum ter stay, strangers, if ye air w put up with ther accomerdashuns."

"Oh, we are willing to do that. We are not p and can bunk down anywhere."

"All right; ye kin put yer horses in ther shed at back uv ther shanty."

"Very well; is there anything that we could give horses in the way of feed?"

"Thar's some oats, stranger; ye'll fin' it behind t manger. We keep it ter give ter ther hoss uv ther fe whut brings us our grub twiced er week."

"That will do nicely."

The two men made their way around to the shed, Harbison leaped down and led his horse in, Dick follow.

They unbridled and unsaddled their horses, gave th some oats, and then made their way around to the fi door of the cabin and opehed the door and entered.

They found four men in the cabin.

They were all between the ages of thirty and forty, were rough-looking, heavily-bearded fellows, and roug dressed.

There was a huge fireplace at one end of the cabi which consisted of simply one large room—and after t had greeted the inmates Dick and Harbison went stood in front of the fire until they were thoroughly warm.

"Et's purty cold out ter-night, hey?" said one.

"You are right, it is."

"Goin' ter New York?" asked another.

"No, to New Brunswick," replied Harbison.

Then the man who had come to the door, and seemed to be the leader, asked them their names.

They told them their names, Dick giving the fictiti one, of course, and then the fellow told his name, wh was Jack Thorp; and the names of his companions v Williams, Sampson and Hurley.

"Hev ye hed enny supper?" Thorp asked.

The two shook their heads.

"Not a bit," said Harbison; "and I am hungry. Ho it with you, Tott?"

"I am hungry as a bear," said Dick.

Thorp laughed hoarsely.

"Then we'll give ye sum b'ar meat ter eet," he s "How'll thet suit ye?"

"First rate," replied Dick. "Have you some bear m sure enough?"

"Yas; we killed er nice fat wun yisterday, an' I tell et's purty good eatin' when ye're hungry."

He brought forth a ham from a closet at one side of room and placed it on a rough slab table. Then he four huge slices and placed them in a frying-pan i which he had already placed some bear grease. Then placed the frying-pan on the coals in the fireplace, and meat soon began to sizzle, sending forth an odor that very appetizing, to say the least.

The man then brought forth several large pieces cornbread and placed them on the table; also a couple tin plates and two knives.

The meat was done Thorp placed the frying-pan on the table and told two to help themselves.

"Water ther table an' he'p yerselves," he invited.

Two were not slow to accept the invitation. They took seats on split-log benches and ate heartily.

"You were right when you said bear meat is good when it is hungry," said Dick, addressing Thorp.

"Ye're right, stranger."

When the two had finished their supper they carried their plates—which were small, being only large enough for one or two to sit on—back to the fireplace and sat down to enjoy the cheerful warmth.

The four men seemed to want to be sociable, in their homely way, and Dick and Harbison talked pleasantly.

Finally Harbison asked Thorp what the four were doing.

"You are not farmers, are you?" he queried.

"No," was the reply; "we are cuttin' timber an' clearin' a new patch uv groun' fur er man whut does want er."

"Oh, you are woodchoppers."

"Yas, thet's et."

While they were talking the door was suddenly opened and the six men rushed into the cabin and closed the door behind them.

They were rough looking fellows, and that their visit to the cabin was not a peaceable one was quickly proven. The leader, a big, black-whiskered fellow with fierce eyes and a villainous look, shook his fist at Jack Thorp, and threatened:

"I've come ter settle thet matter, Jack Thorp!"

"Whut matter?" asked Thorp, who did not seem to be alarmed.

"Ye know well ernuff; erbout ther widder."

"Oh, erbout ther widder, hey?"

"Yes; ye know thet both uv us hev been courtin' Widder Boggs, an' ez only wun uv us kin have her, an' she hez sed ter make er decision, we'll hev ter decide ther matter between ourselves."

The friends of Thorp and the friends of the fierce-looking black-whiskered fellow glared defiance at each other. It was evident there was a good chance that there would be a free-for-all fight before the affair ended.

Dick and Harbison pushed their stools back out of the room, and looked on with interest, and with it was a measure of amusement, for it seemed—at least to Dick—absurd to think that either of the rough-looking, bewhiskered fellows would be in love, as seemed to be the case; for it was evident that the "widder" was a bone of contention between them. "All right, Jim Boggs," said Thorp, slowly and grimly. "I'm willin' ter hev ther matter settled; but how is et to be done?"

"I guess we'll hev ter fight et out."

"With fists, I suppose."

"Fists, knives er pistols, et don't matter ter me," was

the fierce response. It was evident that Jim Boggs was something of a desperado.

"Waal, I guess fists is ez good er way ez enny; we kain't kill each other, an' thar hain't no need thet we sh'd do thet. We'll fight et out with fists, an' ther winner is ter hev ther widder."

"All right; thet suits me. Git up an' we'll go at et."

Thorp got slowly up and took off his coat, and proceeded to roll up his sleeves, displaying a pair of great, brawny arms.

Boggs watched this proceeding with a sneering smile.

"Takin' er lot uv trouble, hain't ye?" he remarked, sarcastically.

"Waal, when I'm expectin' ter fight er battle I want er be in trim fur doin' ther best thar is in me," was the drawling reply.

Dick eyed Thorp closely and was favorably impressed. He liked the cool, calm manner in which the wood-chopper accepted the situation.

"I'll wager that he'll be a hard man to handle," said Dick to himself.

Then he looked at Boggs, and decided that he would be a hard man to handle, also.

"It will be a hard fight," the youth decided; and then he glanced at the comrades of the two men, and the thought came to him that it would be an accident if the affair did not terminate in a free fight, with all hands mixed up.

In that case, Thorp and his friends would probably get the worst of it, for they were only four, while there were six in the other party.

Dick decided that as Thorp and his friends had been good enough to let himself and his companion stay overnight and had given them their supper, he could not do less, as their guest, than help them out if the occasion arose.

"When ye're ready jest say so," said Boggs, growlingly. "Ye air jest fixin' yerself up ter git er good lickin'."

"Waal, ef ye lick me et can't be helped; but I'll prommus ye, Jim, thet by ther time ther affair is ended ye'll know thet ye hev been in er scrimmage."

"Mebby so; but I'll lick ye jest ther same."

"Not if I kin he'p et."

Then he stepped out into the middle of the room and said:

"I'm ready."

"An' so'm I," in a snarling voice; "I've been reddy five minutes."

Then Jim Boggs ran at Thorp and began striking at him with all his force and with great rapidity.

CHAPTER II.

A LIVELY TIME.

As may well be supposed, the spectators were greatly interested.

They watched the two belligerents with eager eyes.

Thorp was forced to act on the defensive, in spite of his evident great strength, for the other's attack was so fierce that there was no standing firm before it, and Thorp had to give some ground.

A few of the blows landed, but not with sufficient force to knock Thorp down. Nor did they seem to have any effect on him, other than to make him more grim and determined. He set his teeth, kept on defending himself and waited for his turn to come.

While Boggs was forcing matters his comrades were delighted, and they kept encouraging him and telling him to knock the other down, etc.

But Boggs could not do this, hard though he tried; and presently he became somewhat winded and was forced to suspend hostilities to a partial extent. He was too weak to fight hard, and it was now Thorp's turn.

He improved his opportunity and went at the other in a fierce manner, and struck at him with great force and swiftness.

Boggs being winded, he was unable to defend himself very successfully, but he did the best he could. This, however, was not sufficient, and presently he received a blow that stretched him on his back on the floor.

"Bully!" cried one of Thorp's comrades. "Thet was er sockdolager."

"You shet up!" said one of the companions of Boggs, scowling; "furst thing ye know ye'll get er sockdolager yerself."

"Who'll give et ter me?" was the prompt and belligerent reply.

"I wull!"

"I'd like ter see ye do et!" and with the words he leaped up and rushed at the other.

The next moment they were hard at it, and when the adherent of Boggs got knocked down this was too much for the other four, and they made an attack on the two friends of Thorp.

Now it was a regular mix-up.

The six men would have been able to get the better of the four, without doubt, but Dick Slater was not disposed to permit this. He was determined to stand by those who had treated him right, and he leaped into the thick of the affray and knocked the members of the Boggs gang right and left. So fierce was his attack and so effective, indeed, that it turned the tide in favor of Thorp and his friends.

Harbison had not taken any hand in the affair; doubtless he thought it no business of his. He was not needed, however, for at the end of fifteen or twenty minutes of fierce fighting the six were whipped in a most thorough manner, and were thrown head over heels out of doors.

"Now git erlong erway frum here," said Thorp; "ef ye come foolin' aroun' erg'in ye'll fare wuss than ye did this time."

"We hain't settled who's ter hev ther widder yit," said Boggs, turning and glaring at Thorp.

"Yes, we hev."

"No, we hevn't."

"Ye bet we hev! Ther widder is ter be Mrs. Dick."

"Not much she hain't. We didn' fight et out wun uv us whipped."

"Waal, wun uv yer men turned et inter er fight, an' we whipped yer crowd, so thet settles Boggs shook his head.

"Et don' do nothin' uv ther kin'," he declared got ter fight et out berteen ourselves."

"I think that the affair ought to be considered in Mr. Thorp's favor," said Dick, who stood ri the big woodchopper; "we whipped your gang ought to settle it."

"Et hain't your put in, young feller," growled "boys sh'd be seen an' not heard."

"He done purty good work in ther fight fur grinned Thorp.

The light from a candle and from the firepl through the open doorway, and it was possible t another plainly.

"I'm as good a man as you are," said Dick, Boggs laughed sneeringly.

"Bosh!" he said, with a snap of his fingers; take ye an' break ye in two, an' not half try, nee hat

"I'll tell you what I will do," said Dick. "I w you this proposition, that I will fight you as Mrive was doing, and if you can whip me you are to l widow, and if I whip you Mr. Thorp is to hll widow."

Boggs was more than willing to do this.

"I'm willin' ef Jack is," he said.

It was plain that he did not think Thorp w willing.

But he was mistaken. Thorp had seen the wo Oh work Dick had done while in the midst of the mel is felt sure that the youth would be able to keep his W the pot boiling.

"I'm willin' ernuff," he said; "but et wouldn't b ter let ye do my fightin' fur me, Mister Tott. I et myse'f."

"That is all right; let me take your place; he th to me in a manner that I don't like, and I want a ba to get even with him."

"All right; go ahead an' fight 'im if ye want; it hope thet ye'll lick 'im."

"Oh, there is no doubt regarding that," with a " "Come on back in the house, Mr. Boggs, and I will you a thrashing that you will remember all the re your life."

"All right; I'm comin'; but I hain't erfeered erbout thrashin'."

"The rest of the gang will have to stay outside," Dick; "there is to be no free-for-all fighting."

"Yas, an' ther hull gang uv ye in thar'll jump Jim an' poun' him," growled one.

"No; they will do nothing of the kind. It won't be

I can pound him enough myself. Come on in,

"Right."

The big ruffian entered the cabin and faced Dick, who

kept up his position at the center of the room.

There was not any time lost by Boggs. He went right

at, even with greater fury than he had displayed

in attacking Thorp; and as had been the case with the

Dick gave ground some at first; but Boggs got tired,

and set up on the attack to such an extent that Dick saw

he would take the offensive.

Dick did so, and then the spectators saw some work with

his fists such as they had never witnessed before. Dick

gave the big ruffian blow after blow, knocking him this

and that, to the huge delight of Thorp and his three

followers.

"Give 'em ter him!"

"That's ther way!"

"Knock his head off!"

These were the exclamations from the lips of the wood-

workers.

The five men who were outside stared through the open

door; and there were ugly scowls on their faces, show-

ing that they did not like the way the encounter was

going.

"Give 'im er good lick, Mr. Tott," said Thorp; "ye kin

to do."

"That's all right."

Then he spoke Dick dealt Boggs a terrible blow on the

head, knocking him down.

Boggs lay still.

"Great guns, ye've killed 'im!" said one of the wood-

workers.

"Oh, no! He's worth a dozen dead men yet," said Dick.

"He is simply dazed, that is all."

"Is Waal, et's er purty deep daze, I'm thinkin'," said

Thorp.

"You fellows may come in now," said Dick to the five

men who were standing outside, staring through the doorway

at the still form of their leader.

They entered and went to work and brought Boggs to

consciousness by bathing his face in cold water. After he had recovered

consciousness they gave him some liquor out of a bottle

which one had in his pocket, and Boggs managed to struggle

to his feet.

"Have you had enough?" asked Dick.

"Yes, I've had ernuff—fer now," replied Boggs, glaring

at Dick; "but ye kin bet thet ef ever I git er chanst at

ye I'll hev revenge fur ther lick ye gave me!" and he felt

the sting of his jaw where Dick's fist had landed.

"You had better not nourish any such notions," said

Dick; "you might get the better of me, true, if you were

to take some advantage of me by catching me unawares.

But at the same time you might try that and fail, and then

you would in all probability get hurt, and badly at that."

"That's all right; I'll take ther chances."

"Ef ye want'er take revenge on ennybody, take et on

me, Jim," said Thorp.

"That's all right; I won't furgit ye, eether, Jack!" was

the vicious reply.

"An' don't forget that the widow belongs to Mr. Thorp,"

said Dick.

A growl escaped the lips of Jim Boggs.

"Et hain't fair ter call thet settled, Jack Thorp," he

said; "we wuz ter fight et out ourselves, an'——"

"But you agreed to let the fight with me settle it," broke

in Dick. "Don't go back on that now."

"I wouldn't hev claimed ther widder if I hed whipped ther

youngster," growled Boggs, "an' so——"

"You know you would have done so," interrupted Dick.

"There is no telling such a lie as that."

An exclamation of anger escaped the lips of the ruffian.

"Don' ye dar' call me a liar!" he cried; "I'll knock ther

head offen ye!"

Dick laughed.

"You tried that and failed," he said; "if, however, you

are not satisfied and wish to try it again you are at liberty

to do so."

But Boggs made no move toward doing this.

"I'll tend ter yer case some other time," he said; "don't

ye furgit thet."

"I will remember, and you may be sure that I will see

to it that you don't get the advantage of me."

"Come erlong, boys," said Boggs, and he strode away, his

five comrades following him.

"Thar goes six mighty big rascals," said Thorp.

Then he closed and barred the door, and the six again

seated themselves in front of the fireplace.

"Who are those fellows, Mr. Thorp?" asked Dick.

"They are wood-choppers, ther same as we are."

"Is that so?"

"Yas; they're clearin' up er trackt of lan' fur ther Wid-

der Tubbs, er mile down ther crick."

"Ah, that is the widow you fought over?"

"Yas, she's ther wun."

"Well, Boggs being in the employ of the widow, rather

had the advantage of you, Mr. Thorp. He could find ex-

cuses for seeing and talking to her often, whereas you

could not."

"That's so; but I hev held him purty level. Ther wid-

der wouldn't decide between us, ez ye heerd us say."

"She must favor you, then, Mr. Thorp," said Dick.

"D'ye think so?" eagerly; "w'y d'ye think thet?"

"Because of the fact that you have held your own against

him, even though he had an advantage over you. Had

she not favored you in her heart Boggs would have distanced

you easily."

"I guess thet's so, by thunder!" agreed Thorp, his face

lighting up.

"Of course it's so; and now that the matter has been

settled by the fight between Boggs and myself, you can go

to the widow and tell her to name the day."

"I'll do et ther furst thing in ther mornin'."

"That's the way to talk," smiled Dick; "and I want an invitation to the wedding."

"Ye shall hev et, Mr. Tott."

Harbison did not have much to say. He had taken no part in the fight between the two parties of wood-choppers, and perhaps he felt somewhat ashamed of himself for sitting there and seeing six men attack four without lifting a hand to assist the four. Doubtless if he had taken a hand in the affair as Dick had done he would have felt more like talking.

An hour later the six lay down. Dick and Harbison spread their blankets on the floor in front of the fireplace, and were not long in going to sleep.

CHAPTER III.

IN NEW BRUNSWICK.

Next morning a fierce blizzard was raging.

The wind was coming down from the north in great strength and fury, and the thickly falling snow was whirling and swirling through the treetops and around the corners of the cabin. The snow was already two and one-half feet deep and was getting deeper every moment.

Jack Thorp stuck his head out through the doorway and gave utterance to an exclamation of dismay.

"Great catamounts!" he half gasped; "whut er storm!"

Dick and the others went to the door and looked out.

"Phew!" whistled Harbison, a look of dismay on his face; "what do you think of that, Tott?"

"It doesn't look very encouraging, Mr. Harbison."

"That's right; this isn't very conducive to traveling, I must say."

"Oh, ye kain't start while et's stormin' like this," said Thorp.

"No," from another of the wood-choppers; "ye'll hev ter make up yer minds ter camp heer till ther storm blows over."

"I guess you are right," agreed Dick.

They closed the door, and Thorp went to work cooking breakfast.

Bear meat, bacon and corn bread was the fare, and the six ate with a relish, for they were strong, healthy men, and could enjoy coarse, wholesome food.

"This bear meat is fine," said Dick.

"I don't care much for it," said Harbison; "I like plain bacon better."

"I'll take er little of both in mine," said Thorp.

When breakfast was over Thorp and his three comrades brought in a new back log and several armloads of smaller sticks and placed them in the huge fireplace. Soon the fire was blazing up at a great rate, and a cheerful warmth pervaded the room, in spite of the blizzard raging out of doors.

They talked awhile, and then Thorp got up and stretched and said:

"I berleeve I'll go over an' see ther widder an' tell her thet it hez been decided who's ter hev her."

"That's a good idea," said Dick; "how far is it to home?"

"Et's only half er mile."

"Well, that is far enough, such a day this."

"I don' min' et; I'm used ter wadin' through ther snow."

He put on a heavy overcoat, and then turned again to Dick:

"Say, Mr. Tott," he remarked, "ther widder has got a nice gal about seventeen years ole, an' ye mought co erlong with me. Ye mought take er noshun to ther gal, ye know."

Dick laughed.

"I have a sweetheart up in New York state, Mr. Thorp," he said; "so I don't care about looking for another."

"Thet's all right; come on over to ther widder's w me, ennyhow; mebby ye kin he'p me 'xplain things to her."

"Oh, well, if I can be of any service to you I will be glad to go along."

"Good! Yer mought be able ter he'p me some."

Dick donned his overcoat and the two set out.

They had hard work wading through the snow, but they were strong and made fair progress.

They were at least half an hour in going the half mile, however, so difficult was the task.

The widow was glad to see Jack Thorp, Dick was surprised.

They entered the house and Dick was introduced to the widow's daughter Laura.

"Et's an orful storm, hain't et!" said the widow, "but she was a buxom, good looking woman of about forty years."

"Yas, et's ther wurst I've seen in ten years," said Thorp.

After they had talked half an hour or so Thorp said:

"Hez Jim Boggs been here this mornin', Missus Tubbs?"

"No," was the reply; "I saw him onct yisterday; he hain't been around ter-day."

"Waal, Missus Tubbs, I guess ez how he needn't be around no more."

"W'y not?" with a surprised look; "whut d'ye mean, Mister Thorp?"

"Jest whut I say. Ye know we've both been a-snoozin' aroun' ye, a-tryin' ter git ye ter prommus ter marry er ther other uv us."

The widow blushed and glanced at Dick.

"Yas, thet's so," she agreed.

"Waal, we hev settled ther question between us."

"Ye hev?" in surprise.

"Yas."

"How?" eagerly.

Thorp told her the story in as few words as possible. She listened, and when he had finished she looked thoughtfully at the floor for a few moments without saying anything.

"Whut d'ye think erbout et?" asked Thorp, anxiously; "air ye goin' ter be satersfied ter hev et settled thet way?" The widow looked at Thorp a few moments, and then said:

"Yas, Jack, I guess et is all right; I think I liked yer best all ther time, an' I'm glad thet ye hev won."

"Hurray!" cried Thorp.

Dick smiled. He was glad to see the big fellow so happy.

"I guess I had better go back to the cabin, Mr. Thorp. am not needed here."

"No, no; ye shan't go," said the widow; "ye mus' stay an' take dinner with us."

Dick demurred; but the widow insisted, and so he finally consented.

The two did stay to dinner, and a good dinner it was. They ate heartily and enjoyed themselves hugely.

Then they bade the widow and her daughter good-by, and were on the point of starting away, when the door opened, and in came Jim Boggs.

He stopped and stared at Thorp and Dick in amazement; a look of rage came into his eyes, too, and he snarled at them.

"Ye heer?"

"Yas, I'm heer, Jim," replied Thorp, calmly; "an' I guess thet ye might as well take yerself off. Missus Tubbs is ergreed ter become Missus Thorp."

"Is thet so?" with a scowl in the direction of the widow.

"Yas, et's so, Mr. Boggs."

"All right," he growled; "I'll go, but ye bet I'll git en with ye two fellers!" shaking his fist at Thorp and Dick.

"All right, Jim," said Thorp. "Enny time ye want enny-thing in outer me ye kin hev et."

"And I will accommodate you at any time you wish me trouble," smiled Dick.

For answer Boggs passed out into the storm, slamming the door shut after him.

"You are lucky to have escaped havin' that fellow for husband, Mrs. Tubbs," said Dick; "he is a villain."

"I'm beginning ter berleeve et," said the widow.

"Mebbe I'm er villyun, too," grinned Thorp.

"Don't you believe that, Mrs. Tubbs," said Dick. "Mr. Thorp is all right. I will vouch for him."

They talked awhile longer, and then Dick and the wood-chopper bade the widow and her daughter good-by and took their departure.

They had quite a task getting back to the cabin, for the storm was still raging, but finally arrived there.

They found the four men taking it easy, smoking and talking and enjoying the cheerful warmth of the huge fire in the fireplace.

About the middle of the afternoon the storm ceased, and Dick and Harbison said they would be going.

"We will be able to reach New Brunswick before night-fall, I think," said Dick.

Harbison said he thought so, too.

They bridled and saddled their horses and then bade their friends good-by, and mounting rode away, having promised that if they passed that way again they would stop.

It was hard work for the horses to make their way along, for the snow was more than three feet deep, and the roads were unbroken and hard to get through.

They arrived at New Brunswick just before sundown, and were challenged by a sentinel.

"Who goes there?"

"Friends," replied Harbison.

"Advance, friends, and give the countersign."

They rode up close to the sentinel, and Harbison said:

"We don't know the countersign, but we are loyal men, so you will make no mistake in letting us enter."

The sentinel was not so sure about that, but at last decided to let them pass.

They rode on into the town and went to the tavern.

The British army was encamped in the town.

On every hand were the cannon, arms, stores and ammunition, and the soldiers were quartered in the houses, storerooms, sheds and buildings of various kinds, where they did the best they could to keep warm and comfortable.

The two men leaped to the ground in front of the tavern, and a hostler came to take the horses.

As the two walked up on to the porch to enter the tavern Dick suddenly felt the cold muzzle of a pistol pressed against his temple, and in his ear was hissed the words:

"Surrender, Dick Slater, you rebel spy!"

It was Harbison who had drawn the pistol and placed it against Dick's temple, and Dick realized that the fellow was a British spy, who had known who he was all the time, and who was simply laying back and waiting for the Liberty Boy to walk into the trap.

"Don't attempt to resist," warned Harbison; "if you do you are a dead man!"

CHAPTER IV.

DICK TAKES A TUMBLE.

Harbison was a British spy.

He had been up in the vicinity of Morristown spying on the patriots, and had managed to get sight of Dick and learn who he was.

He knew there was a reward of five hundred pounds on the youth's head, and he made up his mind that if he ever got the chance he would earn the reward.

It happened that in returning to New Brunswick he had, as we have seen, fallen in with Dick. He had recognized the youth at once, and on finding that he was going to New Brunswick, had decided to play a waiting game and let the intended victim ride right into the trap.

Dick had done so, and now he was in great danger.

To permit himself to be captured would be to run the risk of losing his life, for he would certainly be shot or

hanged as a spy. To attempt to escape might result in immediate death, for he was sure that Harbison was a man who would not hesitate to shoot him down, rather than permit him to escape.

So far as that was concerned, however, Dick did not see how he was to escape out of the town, even if he did get away from Harbison. He was in the heart of the British encampment, and there were more than fifteen thousand soldiers within the confines of the town.

Still, he was determined not to submit to capture until absolutely no avenue of escape remained.

These thoughts flashed through his mind in an instant, as it were.

They went through his mind in the interval between the first warning statement of Harbison and the second one.

Quick as a flash Dick ducked his head, and getting it away from the muzzle of the pistol, at the same instant he struck Harbison a back-handed blow, knocking him clear off the porch and down on to the sidewalk.

With one bound Dick was at the door of the tavern.

Opening the door, he passed into the tavern quickly, and then pulled the door shut after him.

He was in a good-sized room—a combined office and bar-room.

There was a man behind the bar, and several more men were in the room, seated at a little table drinking liquor.

Dick paid no attention to any of the inmates, but hastened across the floor and opened a door at the rear of the room, and was passing through, when the man behind the bar cried out:

"Holt on! Vat do you mean py dot pizness? Gome back mit you!"

Dick paid no attention to the Dutchman, however, but passed on through and closed the door.

Before him stretched a long hall, and Dick sped along it as fast as possible.

Meanwhile what of Harbison?

If there ever was an angry man, it was he at the moment he went flying into the air after being struck by Dick.

When he alighted upon the sidewalk it was with such force as to nearly knock the breath all out of his body.

He was temporarily dazed, and lay there in the most helpless manner imaginable. His pistol had fallen out of his hand and was lying on the porch.

It was only for a brief period that Harbison was incapable of movement, however, and then he scrambled to his feet and ran up the steps and across the porch to the tavern door, which he opened hastily, and entered the bar-room.

He gave a quick, sweeping glance around the room, saw that Dick Slater was not there, and cried out:

"Where did he go? Quick! Tell me!"

"Vere did who go, mine friendt?" asked the Dutchman.

"That rebel spy that came in here a few moments ago."

"Vat! Vos dot ein rebel sby?"

"He went through that door yonder," volunteered one of the men at the tables.

Without a word Harbison bounded toward the door.

He jerked the door open and leaped through into the hall beyond.

He looked along the hall, but there was no one to be seen.

He ran along the hall clear to the end and tried the door.

It was locked, and when he looked for the key he found it missing.

"He didn't get out this way," said Harbison to himself.

Then he went back along the hall, stopping and looking into each room that he came to; but he saw no signs of Dick Slater.

When he got back to the barroom he was met with inquiries as to whether he had seen the rebel spy.

"No, I have not seen him," he replied. "He has escaped in some manner, though I don't know how."

The Dutch owner of the tavern was asked where the fugitive could have gone so suddenly, and he replied that he did not know.

"He must have gone ouid of doors," he replied. "De is no odder place he gould hav gone."

"There is only one door, and it is locked," said Harbison.

"Und der key—vere is it?"

"It is gone."

"Den he has gone ouid of doors."

Several of the men had crowded around the British spy and they asked him who the young fellow was.

He told them.

Several had heard of Dick Slater, and they became somewhat excited.

"Let's go out of doors and look for him," they said.

They hastened out of doors and looked all around. They went to the stable and asked the hostler if the young stranger had been there.

"No," was the reply; "I hain't seen 'im."

"Is his horse still here?"

"Sartin et is."

The men hardly knew what to think.

Harbison knit his brows and pondered.

"This beats anything I have ever experienced," he said. "How that rebel managed to get away so suddenly and mysteriously is more than I can imagine."

He was deeply chagrined and did not like to give up.

"I will search the tavern from cellar to garret, but what I will find that tricky rebel," he said.

They went back to the tavern and asked the Dutch proprietor if they might search the building.

"Yah, you gan do dot uf you vos vant to," was the reply.

So Harbison, aided by three or four of the men, went to work.

He searched the building from cellar to the garret.

had said he would do; but he did not find Dick Slater. He finally returned to the barroom, and Harbison, angry and disgusted, proceeded to drink more than was good for him. In less than an hour he was completely intoxicated.

He had expected to take Dick Slater to headquarters prisoner, and to make such a total failure was exasperating. Being a man who was addicted to the use of liquor, at once drowned his disappointment in the wine that the old Dutchman dished out. He would not report the matter to the British general, because he did not want it to be known that he had made such a failure.

And now, where was Dick?

He had met with a most singular adventure, and one that, while it startled him and caused him some discomfort and the loss of more or less cuticle, had enabled him to escape being captured by Harbison and the men who had been searching for him.

Then Dick ran along the hall to its end and found the door locked and the key missing he did not know what to do.

He caught hold of the doorknob and gave a hard pull, making that he might pull the door open, even though it was locked, for the lock did not look to be over strong. He did not succeed in doing this, but he did something something wholly unexpected.

The trap-door gave way underneath his feet, and down through the opening he shot, striking the floor fifteen feet away with a thud. He lost his balance and tumbled over, maiming his right arm at the elbow.

The trap-door went back into place with a click.

Dick was in a room that was as dark as Erebus.

He got up and began feeling along the walls. In this way he was enabled to guess at the size of the room. It was so he judged, about twelve feet long, by eight feet wide.

He was feeling around, sizing up the room, when he heard the footsteps of someone above his head.

"That is Harbison, likely," he told himself. "Well, unless he takes an accidental tumble down through the trap-door the same as I did the chances are good that he will find me."

What puzzled Dick was the fact that there was no door in any one of the four walls of the room into which he had been so unceremoniously dropped.

"It would seem that this was made as a hiding place, possibly a secret storehouse," thought Dick. "The only way to get out seems to be by the route I used in coming." It was not very cold down there, so Dick did not suffer in this respect.

The things that worried him were, first, how was he to get out of the cellar compartment? And second, how was he to escape from the British encampment after he did get out?

These were difficult questions, and being unable to answer them, he dismissed them from his mind—or, rather,

he dismissed the last one. The other he proceeded to figure on.

It did not take him long to decide that he could not get out of the room unaided. The only possible place to get out was by way of the trap-door—at least, so it seemed—and he could not reach the trap-door, even by jumping up with all his might. Nor was there anything that could be used to stand on or to climb up on.

He listened to the trampling of feet above his head, as Harbison moved along the hall looking for him; and later on he heard footsteps much nearer. He listened closely, and decided that the footsteps were in the cellar.

"This room is really part of one large cellar," he told himself, "and for some reason it was divided off by a partition or wall."

Dick placed his ear to the wall and heard the voices of the men on the other side quite plainly.

"I believe this is a wooden partition," he told himself; "and if that is the case the chances are that I may be able to find a weak place in it somewhere and break through."

He waited till the men had left the cellar, and then he began testing the wall.

There was a covering of mud-like plaster on the wall, and Dick took out his knife and cleared this away, over a space of perhaps two feet square.

Then he made an examination as well as he could by feeling, and found that the partition consisted of slabs about three inches wide, placed tolerably close together.

He managed to get his fingers between a couple of the slabs, and then he pulled with all his might.

To his delight he felt the slab giving.

He pulled harder.

The slab kept on giving, and at last, by a supreme effort, Dick managed to jerk the slab loose.

It was easier to get the next one loose, for he used the first one as a pry, and soon he made an aperture a foot and a half wide and several feet in length.

He lost no time in climbing through.

It was not quite so dark in the large part of the cellar—for this is where Dick now was—and he made his way along until he came to a flight of steps leading up to the first floor.

He made his way up the steps and came to a door at the top.

Just as he was on the point of lifting the latch the door opened, revealing a girl of perhaps eighteen.

At sight of Dick she threw up her hands, and in another instant would have given utterance to a scream; but the youth lifted his hand warningly, and said:

"Sh! Don't cry out!"

CHAPTER V.

GETTING READY FOR WORK.

The girl repressed the scream and asked, in a low voice: "Are you the patriot spy they are hunting?"

"Yes," replied Dick.

The fact that the girl had used the word "patriot" proved to him that she was a patriot herself, and he felt safe in acknowledging that he was one.

"I won't betray you," she said, earnestly. "I am a patriot, and if you will go back down in the cellar and say there until Mr. Harbison and the others get through searching the tavern I will let you know when they have finished and we will talk this matter over. Of course you want to escape from the encampment."

"Yes; but I would like to learn something about the plans and intentions of the British before going. I have only just got here."

"Sh! Someone is coming! Go back down into the cellar," said the girl.

Dick did so, and the door closed behind his back.

He waited half an hour more, and then the girl came down into the cellar to get some potatoes to cook for supper.

"Stay here until I come again," she said; "and then I will have some supper for you. I think I can give you all the information there is, so there will be no need of your staying in the town, and if you can slip away you will do well to do so."

"Thank you, Miss—"

"Sophia Morgan, sir."

"You are very kind to me, Miss Morgan. I assure you that I appreciate it," said Dick. "If ever I get the chance to repay you you may be sure that I will do it."

"Say no more; you are welcome, Mr.——"

"My name is Dick Slater."

"You are welcome, Mr. Slater."

The girl went back upstairs, and was gone an hour. Then she brought him a plate heaped up with food. Dick was hungry, and ate heartily, and while he ate the girl told him the news.

"The British are not intending to make any move," she said; "they are simply waiting here until better weather comes. That will in all probability not be until April or May, so you can readily see that your army is in no danger."

"True; but are you sure that this is the case?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where did you get your information?"

"From the soldiers who come here to the tavern to eat their meals."

"Ah, yes; you overhear them talk while eating."

"Yes."

"Well, the information you have given me is of value; and now I must think of getting away from here."

"Yes, that will be the most difficult thing to do."

"I think I can succeed, however."

"I hope so."

When Dick had finished his supper the girl bade him good-by and went back upstairs.

Dick waited till about ten o'clock, and then, everything being quiet upstairs, he went up and out into the kitchen.

A candle was burning on the table, but there was no light in the room.

Dick made his way out of the kitchen into the hall, along the hall to the rear door. This time he found a key in the lock. The girl had placed it there.

He unlocked the door and looked out.

No one was in sight.

The stable was fifty yards distant, and Dick stepped out of doors and made his way to the stable.

The door was closed, but was not fastened, and he opened it without difficulty.

He entered the stable and went to the little room where the hostler slept.

The man was sound asleep, and Dick managed to take his bridle and saddle without awakening him.

Then he found Major, and soon had the bridle and saddle in place.

Then he led the horse out of the stable, and mounted and rode out upon the street.

Dick had decided on his course.

He had made up his mind that he would make a desperate dash and attempt to get out of the town before the redcoats could understand what was taking place.

He at once put his plan into execution.

He urged Major to a gallop, and then into a run, and down the street they went with the speed of the wind.

The streets were packed down, there having been plenty of travel over the snow, so the horse could make good speed.

Dick was through the town and at the edge before an attempt was made to stop him. Then a sentinel, seeing him coming with the speed of the wind, yelled at him to stop, and then fired at him immediately afterward.

The bullet whistled past Dick's ear.

It was not a moonlight night, but it was clear, and the snow on the ground made it light enough so that the sentinels could see Dick plainly.

Others began firing at him now, and several bullets whistled past his head.

Luckily none of them hit him, and he dashed onward down the road.

There was much deeper snow here, and Major could not make quite such good headway; but it was not necessary that he should.

Dick felt that so far as danger from the British was concerned he need not have any fears. They could not catch him now.

Onward he rode.

He did not intend to go clear to Morristown that night. It was too far and too cold; he would go to the home of the wood-choppers and stay there until morning. He knew he would be welcome.

He arrived there at last, and when Jack Thorp came to the door and saw who the visitor was he was delighted.

"I'm mighty glad ter see ye, Mr. Tott," he said; "put yer hoss in ther stable, while ye go on inter ther cabin."

"I'll attend to the horse; you stay in the house."
 "All, all right; go ahead."
 "I did so."
 "He rode to the stable, dismounted, and led Major into
 and then unbridled and unsaddled him. This done,
 went to the cabin and entered.
 "Four men gave him a hearty welcome.
 "He didn't stay long in New Brunswick," said Thorp.
 "I got through with my business and came away at
 once."
 "He talked awhile, and then lay down and went to
 sleep."
 "The next morning, after a hearty breakfast, Dick
 led his horse and rode away toward Morristown.
 "He arrived there before noon and went straight to head-
 quarters.
 "General Washington was glad to see him.
 "He asked Dick if he had learned anything of interest
 there.
 "I have learned something of interest, sir," was the
 answer.
 "When he told the commander-in-chief what he had heard,
 the general was well pleased.
 "I am glad that I have found out that the British
 intend to remain quietly in camp at New Brunswick till
 the weather sets in," he said.
 "After they had finished talking Dick asked permission
 to take his Liberty Boys and go out on a sort of free-lance
 mission.
 "I will go everywhere," Dick explained, "and will
 give the enemy a blow whenever and wherever the op-
 portunity is presented."
 "You have my permission to do this," said the com-
 mander-in-chief; "but you must be careful. You must
 remember that there is a large force at New Brunswick
 and that there will be a great many foraging and maraud-
 ing parties sent out. If several of these parties should
 meet after you they might succeed in capturing you, or
 in killing a large number of your men."
 "We will be very careful, sir."
 "That is right."
 "Then Dick saluted and withdrew.
 "He went to the quarters occupied by the Liberty Boys,
 and found them sitting around telling stories.
 "They were not very lively or jolly, however, for they
 were young and full of life, and to have to be cooped up
 in this manner was very trying to them. They
 wanted to be out and doing.
 "When Dick told them that he had some work for them
 and that they were well pleased.
 "That was what they wanted.
 "When will we start out, Dick?" asked Bob Estabrook,
 the young commander's right-hand man.
 "Oh, right away."
 "Good!"
 "I think we might as well get at the work as quickly as
 possible."

"I think we would much better do so; we are not do-
 ing any good here, and if we get out and hustle around
 we may be able to do something."

"So we may."

"Yah, dot peen der vaet uf der madder," said Carl
 Gookenspieler.

"Phwat d'yez know abhout it, Cookyspieler?" asked
 Patsy Brannigan, sneeringly.

"I vos knowded as much aboudid id as vat you know,
 Batsy Prannigan," was the retort.

"Begin making preparations for our trip," ordered Dick,
 breaking in upon the belligerent. "We will start imme-
 diately after dinner."

The youths at once went to work. They looked to their
 weapons, cleaning them and oiling them; and they refilled
 their ammunition pouches and placed food in their haver-
 sacks.

They had finished by dinner time, and when they had
 eaten the meal they bridled and saddled their horses and
 mounted and rode away.

"I hope we will have a lively time while we are away
 on this trip," said Bob Estabrook.

"I think the chances are that your hopes will be realized,"
 said Dick.

And Dick was right. They were to have a lively time.

CHAPTER VI.

A DANGEROUS SITUATION.

"Hello, there's our chance, Dick!"

"It looks that way, Bob."

"Yes; that is a foraging band of redcoats, without a
 doubt."

"I think so; they are a long ways off yet, but I be-
 lieve that the uniforms are red."

"Yes, the uniforms are those of the British troopers."

"How many men are there in the party, do you think?"

"About fifty."

"We have twice that number, and we will have the ad-
 vantage of taking them by surprise. I guess we can
 easily thrash them."

"Yes, without a doubt."

"Our fellows will be here before the redcoats reach this
 point, don't you think?"

"Yes; they are not far behind us."

"Then all we have to do is to remain here and wait."

"You are right."

Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook had ridden on ahead
 of the main party of Liberty Boys and had stopped on a
 hill to take a look ahead to see if they could see any signs
 of the British. They had been there but a few minutes
 when a party of troopers came in sight away in the dis-
 tance, whereupon the above conversation had ensued.

Presently the main party of the Liberty Boys came

riding up. They were riding at a gallop, and as soon as they came up to where Dick and Bob were one of their number called out:

"We are being pursued, Dick!"

"Is that so? Who are the pursuers?" asked the youth.

"A force of British troopers."

"How large a force?"

"About two hundred."

"That is most too large a force for us to fight against, unless we have all the advantage of position."

"True."

"We are between two fires," said Bob; "another force is coming from the southward, although it is a small one."

"What shall we do, Dick?" asked Mark Morrison.

"I guess that we will make a stand right here," was the reply.

Dick gave the order for the youths to lead their horses back into the timber, and this was done.

As soon as they had tied the animals to trees the Liberty Boys hastened back toward the road, and took up their positions behind trees.

"We are outnumbered," said Dick; "but by holding out stubbornly to the end we may succeed in beating the British off and sending them back the way they came."

He told the youths what he wanted them to do, and then they settled down to await the coming of the enemy.

Presently the large party from the north came in sight, and a little later the small one from the south appeared.

Closer and closer they drew.

The Liberty Boys got ready to give the enemy a warm welcome.

To their surprise, and greatly to their disappointment, however, the two parties came to a stop before they got within musket-shot distance.

The youths did not understand this move at all.

It was very easily explained, however, had they known it. Both parties of British had Tory scouts and spies along with them, and these scouts had discovered the presence of the Liberty Boys and had warned the British.

Dick guessed that this was what had happened, and he told the youths so.

"We will have to look out for ourselves," he said; "we are not going to succeed in surprising them, and that robs us of our advantage. In a fair fight they will beat us, I fear, for they have more than twice as many men as we have."

"Oh, we could lick them if they had four times as many men as we have," said Bob Estabrook.

"I don't feel so sure of that, Bob," said Dick.

"I am sure of it."

Then they turned their attention to the British.

It did not take long to learn what the redcoats intended doing. They had dismounted and were disappearing in the timber at both sides of the road.

"They are going to try to surround us," said Dick. "I

think we had better retreat through the timber as as possible."

"That won't be very rapid," said Rob; "we can't go along fast and lead our horses."

"Well, we will do the best we can."

Dick gave the order, and the youths hastened to their horses were, untied them and started through the timber.

It was slow work, but they kept on moving.

Presently they heard cries behind them, and knew the British had discovered what they were doing and were coming in pursuit.

"Move along as rapidly as possible, boys," said Dick; "they are coming after us."

"That is just what they are doing, Dick," said Mark Morrison.

The cries of the pursuing redcoats grew louder and plainer, and pretty soon the youths caught sight of the soldiers.

"They will soon be within musket-shot distance," said Dick; "and then we will have to stop and show fight."

"All right," said Bob Estabrook. "That is what I intend to do."

They kept on going as rapidly as possible, and presently they found themselves on a high bluff overlooking a stream of water. The bluff was at least fifteen feet high, and the stream made a great bend at this point, the bluff about the same height all the way around.

The Liberty Boys were well back on the neck of the bluff before they knew it, and the redcoats were now so near that it would not be practicable to retreat.

The only thing to do was to make a stand and fight out to a finish.

Having discovered that they were on a peninsula, Dick told the youths to retreat on back to the extreme end, and this was done.

Here they took up their position and, having covered themselves behind trees, awaited the attack.

It was not long in coming.

The British, confident in their strength of numbers, advanced until they were within musket-shot distance and opened fire.

The Liberty Boys were not slow to return the fire. And they were better marksmen than the redcoats; they did more damage in proportion to the number of men fired.

The encounter was a lively one. The interchanging volleys made the woods ring.

Shrieks and groans of the wounded soon made the air anything but pleasing.

The firing continued steadily, the soldiers on both sides reloading and firing as rapidly as possible.

The redcoats fired more rapidly than was the case with the Liberty Boys, for they did not try to take aim, but fired in the direction of the youths as soon as their weapons loaded. The Liberty Boys, on the

and, took aim before firing, and consequently did more damage.

At last Dick saw that the redcoats were making arrangements to charge, and he knew that this would bring matters to a focus.

He told the youths what the enemy was going to do, and then asked what they should do.

"Well, I, for one, am not in favor of surrendering," said Bob Estabrook.

The majority of the youths said they preferred to fight to a finish, rather than surrender.

While they were talking, and while the British were getting ready to charge, there was a sudden cracking sound, and the extreme point of the peninsula broke off and fell down upon the ice. There were a number of trees on the portion that caved off, and they made considerable noise as they went crashing downward.

Where the point broke off it left the bluff in a slanting position, and Dick saw a chance to at least make an attempt at escaping.

"Lead the horses down the incline to the ice!" he cried; "I think the ice will hold them up, and if so we may succeed in escaping. Hurry, all!"

The Liberty Boys hastened to obey the command.

CHAPTER VII.

A REMARKABLE DELIVERANCE.

They led the horses down the incline.

It was perhaps twenty feet wide, so the youths could go three or four abreast.

The British did not at first realize what was going on. The Tory scouts had told them that it was impossible for the rebels to escape, so, although they saw the youths leading their horses, they did not suspect that their intended victims were escaping them.

More than half the total number of youths had gone down the incline before the redcoats became convinced that something unusual was going on.

"They seem ter be disappearin'," said one of the Tory scouts, with a puzzled look on his face; "but I don't see how they c'u'd go ter. Their bluff is fifteen feet high er."

"We will charge them and find out what it means," said the commander of the combined forces of the redcoats.

He gave the command, and the soldiers advanced on the

The last lot of Liberty Boys were going down the incline, and when the redcoats got there and saw what had taken place they gave utterance to yells of rage and started down the incline in pursuit, firing their muskets as they went. They wounded two or three of the youths, but not one was killed, and the Liberty Boys leaped into the saddles and urged the horses across the ice at a gallop.

The ice was at least two feet thick, and would have held up an army; and the horses, being roughshod, had no difficulty in keeping their footing.

The redcoats gave utterance to still louder yells of rage and discomfiture, and, pausing at the foot of the incline, fired a last volley at the fleeing rebels.

One of the Liberty Boys was struck.

It was Carl Gookenspieler, and although the wound was merely a slight flesh one, he thought he was killed.

"Oh—ow! I am hitted by ein bullet!" he howled. "I vos peen killed deader as two doornails, und dot is so!"

"Where were you wounded?" asked Dick, who happened to be riding near the Dutch youth.

"Oh, I vos peen vounded der side in."

Dick reached out and unbuttoned the youth's coat, and made as good an examination as possible.

He quickly saw that it was not a serious wound, by any means.

"It is only a slight flesh wound, Carl," he said. "You are all right."

"Is dot der trut', Dick?"

"Yes."

"Goot! Dot vos mage me much habbiness."

Patsy Brannigan, who was riding near at hand, and who had been looking pretty serious when Carl said he was killed, now burst into a loud laugh.

"An' ye t'ought ye wuz kilted, Cookyspiller!" he cried; "shure an' Oi didn't t'ink ye wur such a baby, so Oi didn't!"

"I vos nod ein papy, Batsy Prannigan," retorted Carl; "I vos peen no more uf ein papy as vat you are, und dot is so."

"G'wan! It's meself would not say Oi wur kilted whin Oi wur merely scratched a bit wid dhe bullet."

"Oh, I know dot you vos peen shoost so prave as two sheepses, Batsy Prannigan!"

"Yis, or three av thim, fur thot matther, Cookyspiller," said Patsy, with a grin.

The youths were all feeling in good spirits.

They had escaped, when capture or death to the majority seemed to be absolutely unavoidable.

An accident had resulted in furnishing them with a means of escape.

Even the wounded youths felt much better than they would have felt had they been captured, for, while wounded, they were at least free.

The redcoats, feeling that it was useless to try to follow the patriot youths, turned and made their way slowly up the incline to the top of the bluff and set out through the timber toward the point where they had left their horses.

The Liberty Boys crossed the river—it was the Raritan—and then came to a stop.

Dick went to the wounded youths, five in number, and made an examination to see how serious the wounds were.

Two of the five were so seriously wounded that it would not do for them to think of trying to remain with the

party. The other three were not seriously wounded, and would be able to remain in the saddle.

"We must find the home of a patriot settler," said Dick, "and leave Tom and Charlie there."

"Yes, that must be done," agreed Bob.

They set out at once, and moved slowly along through the timber.

Presently they came to a road, and turned to the right, at a guess.

They moved slowly along, and at the end of half an hour came to a good-sized loghouse standing near the road.

Here they paused, and Dick leaped to the ground and went to the door and knocked.

The door was opened by a rough, but good-natured looking man, who looked at Dick and then at the Liberty Boys in surprise.

"Howdy, stranger," he said.

"How do you do," said Dick; "I wish to ask a favor, sir."

"Whut is et?"

"There are a couple of wounded youths out there. They are so seriously wounded that they cannot ride any farther. Will you take them in and take care of them until they are able to get into the saddle again?"

"Sart'inly, stranger; bring 'em right in. Bill Burdock ain't ther man ter turn ye frum his doors. Bring 'em right in."

Dick called to Bob, and said:

"Bob, you and some of the others bring Tom and Charlie into the house."

"All right," was the reply.

Eight of the Liberty Boys lifted the two wounded youths out of the saddles and carried them into the house and placed them on a bed in a room back of the large sitting-room.

Besides Mr. Burdock there was his wife, Mary, and a daughter, Susie.

Mrs. Burdock was a good-natured, motherly woman, and she bustled around and got cloth for bandages, and some liniment, and Dick dressed the wounds and applied the salve and bandages.

The man was quite curious, and asked a number of questions.

Dick, by careful questioning, found out that Burdock was a patriot, and so he told him who himself and comrades were.

The man was glad to know who the youths were, and he promised Dick that the two wounded youths should have the best attention that could be given them.

"Mary an' Susie will nurse 'em," he said; "an' ye kin bet thet they'll do ther work good."

"I am sure of that," said Dick; "we will drop in once in awhile and see how the boys are getting along, as we will be running around this part of the country for quite awhile."

Dick and the other youths now went into the room where

the wounded Liberty Boys were and bade them good- and encouraged them as much as possible.

Then they went out and mounted their horses and rode away.

Mr. Burdock had promised to look after the horses longing to Tom Farrell and Charlie Chisholm, the two wounded youths, and he came out and led the two horses to the stable as the Liberty Boys rode away.

The youths were in very good spirits indeed.

They had come out of a tight place with safety, and they could not feel other than happy and well satisfied.

"That was a narrow escape, Dick," said Bob, as they rode along side by side.

"Yes, it was, old fellow. But we did escape."

"Yes, by the intervention of Providence."

"It was rather wonderful, the caving off of the end of the peninsula, Bob."

"Wonderful? I should say so!"

"We would not have been able to escape otherwise."

"No; we would have had to surrender, or else we would have lost practically all our comrades."

"True; the British were too strong for us. Our only chance would have been for us to abandon our horses and leap down upon the ice and try to escape afoot."

"I would prefer to fight to a finish, rather than give up the horses."

"And so would I."

On they rode.

Back near the center of the party of youths were Cookenspieler and Patsy Brannigan.

"How is yer wound, Cookyspiller?" asked Patsy, with a grin. "D'yez t'ink it wull be dhe d'ith av ye?"

"Vat is der madder mit me, Batsy Prannigan!" cried Carl, angrily; "der voond vat I hav gotted is more worse as vat you t'ink, bud I haf nod sait dot it would make me deat, alretty."

"Oi don't suppose it would be afther makin' me deat ye sauerkraut barrel, yez!" said Patsy.

"You know vat I haf said, Batsy Prannigan, und I know vat I hav meant aboud dot, too, so vat is der madder mit me?"

"Yez wull have to ask somebody ilse, Cookyspiller; I can't till yez phwat is dhe matther wid yez."

"If you two idiots don't stop chattering I'll bump your heads together till they are all flattened out!" said Morrison, who rode right behind the two.

"Don't yez be after tryin' dot, me bye," said Patsy Brannigan.

"Nein; don't vos do dot," said Carl; "I vos vant to dose hait uf mine."

The youths rode onward, talking of the late encounter with the redcoats.

Presently they saw smoke ahead of them.

"I wonder what that means," said Dick.

"I don't know," replied Bob. "Looks as though a house might be on fire."

"Perhaps a party of redcoats has set some patriot's house on fire," said Mark Morrison.

"Then let's hasten forward and look into the matter," said Bob Estabrook, eagerly.

"Forward!" cried Dick.

The youths urged their horses to a gallop and rode onward until they came to a bend in the road.

As they dashed around this bend they came in sight of the burning house—for that was what had made the smoke the youths had seen.

The house was only a quarter of a mile away, and in front of it, hitched to the fence, were about fifty horses, while in the yard watching the burning cabin were the owners of the horses—British troopers, as their scarlet uniforms proved.

This was noted at a single glance, and then Dick cried out:

"Forward, men! Charge the redcoats. Teach them that it doesn't pay to burn the homes of patriot settlers!"

The youths replied with cheers. The redcoats had already seen them, so the cheers could be uttered without reserve.

When they were closer to the enemy the youths cried out:

"Down with the king! Long live liberty!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A LIVELY CHASE.

The British troopers had rushed out of the yard and were now mounted and fleeing up the road.

They were not strong enough to offer battle, and they knew it, so had recourse to flight.

It at once became a lively race.

Dick, as they came even with the house, took in the situation at a glance.

He decided that the cabin could be saved from burning down, and so he called out the names of half a dozen of the youths and ordered them to stop and extinguish the fire.

The youths named dropped out, dismounted, tied their horses, and rushing into the yard, proceeded to extinguish the fire.

The settler had a couple of pails, and there was a creek close at hand, so it did not take long to get the flames under control.

The settler thanked the youths earnestly.

"You have saved my home," he said. "I wish that I could repay you, but thanks is all I have to offer."

"And they are sufficient, yes, more than sufficient, sir," said Mark Morrison, who was the leader of the little party of fire-fighters; "we did only our duty in rendering you assistance."

"I thank you heartily, just the same."

"And so do I," from his wife.

"You are welcome," said Mark. "You are a patriot, are you not?"

"Yes."

"I judged so; else the redcoats would not have set your house on fire."

"And are you young men patriots?"

"We are."

"All those who went past are patriots, then?"

"Yes, they are the Liberty Boys, of whom you may have heard."

"Yes, I have heard of them; and I am glad to make the acquaintance of some of them."

He shook hands with the six, and his wife did the same. They had no children.

Meanwhile the main party of the Liberty Boys were chasing the British troopers.

It was a great race.

The troopers had very good horses, and the Liberty Boys found that it was extremely difficult to gain on the enemy.

They did gain a little, but it was so slowly that it was scarcely perceptible.

"At this rate, when will we overhaul them, Dick?" asked Bob, in a tone of disgust.

"I don't know, Bob; when do you think we will catch them?"

"Well, if you want my candid opinion, I believe that the war will be over before you overhaul them—and then we will have all of our trouble for nothing. Having caught up with them, there will be no fight. We will have to content ourselves with passing the time of day."

Dick laughed.

"Oh, I guess it won't take that long to catch up with them, Bob."

"I hope not."

The chase went on.

Presently the Liberty Boys crossed a crossroad, and swept on in pursuit of the fleeing redcoats, and they had not gone a quarter of a mile farther before they discovered that they were in danger themselves. A force of at least two hundred British troopers had come along the crossroad and had turned into the main road in pursuit of the Liberty Boys.

"What do you think of that, Dick?" asked Bob.

"Looks as though the pursuers are to be pursued, Bob," was the reply.

"That's right. Say, do you suppose that is the same party that we escaped from back at the river?"

"I believe that it is, Dick."

"Well, we must get away from them."

"Let's stop somewhere and fight them."

"They are too strong for us, Bob."

"I don't think so; we can lick them."

"Yes, we might thrash them; but we would lose a lot of our brave boys while we were doing this."

"True; but they are willing to take their chances."

"I know they are; but I am not willing that they should

do so. I don't want to fight when the odds are in favor of the other fellows. I want to have the advantage with us."

"Then we will have to keep on running, I suppose."

"Yes; that is what we must do."

Presently they came to a crossroad, and turned into it and rode away at right angles with the course they had been pursuing.

The large party of British troopers followed them, and the small party, noting that it was no longer being pursued, turned and came on in the rear of the large party.

The Liberty Boys had the best horses and began gradually drawing away from their pursuers.

They rode onward, a mile or so, until they came to another crossroad, and here they again turned to the left and rode toward the south.

It was Dick's purpose to get back to the vicinity of the house where Mark Morrison and his five comrades had stopped to put out the fire.

They rode onward until they were about even with the settler's home—so Dick judged—and then they turned to the left once and rode up another crossroad.

They were not long in getting back to the main road, and were within half a mile of the home of the patriot whose house had been set on fire by the redcoats.

Over from the road, distant nearly a quarter of a mile across a pasture, was a ridge, wooded on the top, and with huge stones and boulders lying all around in great profusion.

Dick took note of this, and decided to go up on top of the ridge and make a stand there.

He told the youths what he intended doing, and they were in favor of it.

"That is just the place, Dick," cried Bob; "we can whip the redcoats out of their boots. They will never be able to get at us up there."

The youths quickly tore down a rod or two of fence, and rode across the pasture and up the slope to the top of the ridge.

The redcoats, while they had fallen behind, were near enough so that they could see what the rebels were doing, and they gave utterance to yells of satisfaction.

They knew that the enemy had decided to stop and make a stand, and they felt that they would be able to defeat the rebels easily.

When they got nearer, however, and looked up at the top of the ridge and saw how strong the position was they stopped and took a careful survey of the situation.

"We outnumber them two to one," said the commander of the force; "but they have a wonderfully strong position, and I fear we shall not be able to dislodge them—at least, not without great loss of life."

The small party of troopers came up at this moment, and was given a welcome.

"That makes us stronger," said the commander; "but I fear we are not strong enough, even now."

"Well, we can make an attack and see how it works out," said an under officer.

"Yes, so we can."

Meanwhile the Liberty Boys, having reached the top of the ridge, were busily engaged in getting ready to do battle with the redcoats.

The ridge was about one hundred yards wide at the top, and the youths led their horses back far enough so that they would not be in any danger of being hit by bullets.

Then the Liberty Boys went back and got things in shape to enable them to make it hot for the enemy when it appeared.

They piled up the smaller rocks, one on top of the other, and thus made a splendid bulwark behind which to hide. The large boulders would answer the same purpose, also.

The Liberty Boys then took up their positions behind the rocks and boulders, and waited to see what the enemy would do.

"I'm afraid they won't attack us," said Bob Estabrook; "we have such a strong position that they will be afraid to do so."

"I don't think you need be afraid of that, Bob," said Dick; "they have a strong force, and will not go away without making an attack."

"That is reasonable to suppose," said Sam Sanderson; "but it looks as though they were not going to be in a hurry to make it."

"They wish to take their time and not rush into the affair," said Dick.

At last the British began to advance.

They came very slowly.

They were in no hurry; they would have trouble enough, as it was.

They paused while they were yet out of musket-shot distance, and again Bob was seized with the fear that the redcoats would not make an attack.

"I told you they would not attack us, Dick," he said; "They don't like the looks of things."

"Well, there is reason why they should be careful. They have a very strong position, you know."

"So we have."

"But I think they will attack us."

"I hope you are right."

The Liberty Boys watched the redcoats and saw that the officers were talking earnestly.

Presently the British force divided, and one portion went to the south, the other north, going in a direction parallel with the ridge.

"What does that mean?" asked Bob.

"Well, it doesn't mean that there is to be no fight, Bob; it simply means a delay in the beginning of hostilities."

"What is their plan?" asked Sam Sanderson.

"They are going to go far enough in each direction to be out of musket-shot distance. Then they will ascend the ridge until they reach the top, and come toward us from both directions, thus getting us between two fires so to speak."

"Say, that is their scheme, sure enough, Dick!" exclaimed Bob, excitedly.

"Without doubt."

"Well, we can make them sick of the plan, can't we, old fellow?"

"Yes; at least we can discourage them some."

Then Dick told the youths to stretch out along the top of the ridge and to be ready to open fire as the redcoats came up the slope.

"As soon as you see them start up the slope concentrate your fire at that point," Dick ordered; "and then give to them, making sure that you take good aim each time before firing."

The youths said they would do this, and then they set out.

The Liberty Boys divided into two parties, as the redcoats had done, and when the latter started to ascend the slope the youths hastened to concentrate at that point.

The British came as rapidly as possible, and as soon as they were within musket-shot distance the Liberty Boys opened fire.

Crack, crack, crack! went the muskets, and down went a number of the redcoats, dead and wounded.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIGHT ON THE RIDGE.

The British returned the fire.

They came on up the slope as rapidly as possible.

It was evident that they were determined to get at the party of audacious rebels.

"Keep loading and firing!" ordered Dick; "don't let them get to the top of the ridge."

The youths obeyed as best they could; they reloaded and fired as rapidly as possible, but they could not stop the advance of the redcoats.

When Dick saw that this was the case he ordered the youths to retire slowly and gradually back along the top of the ridge.

The other party of Liberty Boys was doing this, and the result was that after awhile they came together again at the point where they had been at first.

The two parties of British had now reached the top of the ridge, and were advancing slowly but steadily toward the youths.

"Shall we mount our horses and retreat down the other side of the ridge?" asked Dick.

The youths looked at one another inquiringly.

"No, let's stay here to the finish, Dick," said Bob; "I'm for holding out to the end."

"All right, then," said Dick. "Stick to your posts and give them the best you have to give."

The youths said that they would do so.

And they did. They loaded and fired as rapidly as

possible, but they were careful to take aim before firing, always, and for this reason they did good work. The British kept on firing rapidly, but they never took aim, consequently their shots did not do much damage.

The redcoats kept on pressing closer and closer, however, and Dick, knowing that if it came to a hand-to-hand encounter his Liberty Boys could not but get the worst of it, decided to beat a retreat.

He gave the order, and the youths ran to where their horses were.

The British gave utterance to yells and dashed toward the Liberty Boys.

The youths managed to untie the horses, leap into the saddles and dash away, however, before the redcoats could fire more than one volley.

One Liberty Boy fell from the saddle dead, and three more were wounded, but they managed to keep their places in the saddles.

There was an open field at the bottom of the slope, and the youths rode across this and into the timber at the farther side.

Then Dick led the way, and they went by a circuitous route to the home of the settler whose house had been set on fire by the redcoats.

Mark Morrison and the other five youths were still there, and they were eager to learn what the trouble was.

"Did you run up against another party of the redcoats?" asked Mark?

"Yes," said Dick, and then he explained the matter.

Mr. Edwards, the owner of the house that had been set on fire, thanked Dick for having driven the redcoats away and been the means of saving the house, and the youth told him that he was welcome.

"Do you suppose the redcoats will come here again?" asked Mark.

"I don't know," replied Dick; "but I guess we may as well remain in the vicinity and see."

Then the Liberty Boys withdrew into the timber and tied their horses to trees. This done they took up their position behind trees and waited and watched.

The redcoats did not put in an appearance, and when evening came the redcoats went into camp.

"We will remain here overnight," he said, "and in the morning we will go out and see if we can get a chance at some more redcoats."

Mr. Edwards furnished the youths with meat and cornmeal, and they had plenty to eat.

After supper was over Dick said to Bob:

"Let's go back to where we had the fight with the redcoats on top of the ridge; I want to find the body of poor Ned Miller and give it burial."

Ned Miller was the youth who had been killed by the last volley fired by the British, as the youths were riding down the slope.

"I was going to suggest that, Dick," said Bob.

They set out at once and advanced through the timber at a lively pace.

When they were nearing the point they were headed for they slowed down and advanced more cautiously.

It was clear, the stars shining brightly, and the snow on the ground made it light enough so they could see plainly for quite a distance.

There was no one to be seen anywhere in the vicinity of the spot where the encounter had taken place that afternoon.

The British had taken their departure.

Nor were there any dead bodies to be seen anywhere. Not even that of the Liberty Boy was to be found.

"I guess the redcoats were generous enough to give poor Ned burial along with their own dead," said Dick.

"It would seem so, Dick."

"Yes; or his body would be here."

Having satisfied themselves that the body of their comrade was not to be found, and that it had been given burial by the redcoats, they made their way up to the top of the ridge and looked in all directions to see if they could get the British encampment located.

They failed to do so, and then, turning, made their way in the direction of their own encampment.

When they arrived there Mark Morrison reported that all had been quiet.

Guards were placed out, and then the youths made themselves as comfortable as possible. They had three or four roaring big campfires, and by keeping these going throughout the night they managed to be fairly comfortable.

Next morning they ate breakfast, bridled and saddled their horses, and mounting, rode away.

They rode along a couple of hours and did not see any signs of redcoats.

Presently Dick said:

"Let's go to the home of Mr. Burdock and see how Tom and Charlie are getting along."

The youths were in for this, and so they rode to the home of the patriot settler where the two Liberty Boys had been left.

When they got there they dismounted and went into the house in parties of twenty, this being about all that could get into the room where the youths were.

Tom and Charlie were feeling weak, but they were in good spirits.

"We will get along all right, Dick," said Charles Chisholm; "don't worry about us."

"That's right—Dick; don't—worry about—us," said Tom Farrell.

Susie Burdock came in at this moment and asked the two if there was anything they wanted to eat, and Dick was shrewd enough to see that both the wounded youths were interested in the girl.

Nor did he blame them.

Susie was a pretty girl, and she was as good-hearted and gentle as a kitten.

"The only trouble is, that if both fall in love with her, it is likely to make them enemies," said Dick to himself.

He would have been sorry to have this occur.

The Liberty Boys had always been just like brothers one another, and he wanted that such a state of affairs should continue always.

Presently the Liberty Boys mounted their horses and went on their way.

They did not encounter any redcoats that day, but this part of the country was thickly settled, comparatively speaking, with patriots, and as it seemed to be a favorable foraging ground for the British, Dick was eager to reach there.

"We must have some place to stay, however—a sort of a permanent camp, as it were," he told Bob. "I wish I knew of a good place."

"Let's go and ask Jack Thorp if he can tell us where to find a good place for a rendezvous," said Bob.

Dick had told Bob all about Jack.

"That is a good suggestion; we are not far from Thorp's cabin and can get there before sundown."

They rode in that direction, and an hour later arrived at the wood-chopper's cabin. Dick knew the men were patriots.

Jack Thorp and his three companions were glad to see Dick, and when the youth told him who they were and asked to be directed to a place where a rendezvous or campment could be made, the wood-chopper said:

"I know jest ther place, an' et's on'y er mile frum here. Et's over on ther river; there's three cabins, an' they'll be all ye fellers nicely."

"That will be fine," said Dick; "will you guide us thither?"

"Uv course I wull; an' we'll let ye hev some axes ter chop wood with."

"Thank you," said Dick.

Then Jack Thorp brought out a couple of axes, and the party set out, the wood-chopper striding along in the lead.

Twenty minutes later they arrived at their destination. It was just what Dick was looking for.

Three good-sized log cabins stood on the bank of the Raritan river. They were surrounded by thick timber, and they could scarcely be seen from a distance of one hundred yards. Farther down the stream, however, there was a large clearing of about fifty acres.

Thorp explained that the cabins had been the headquarters of the men who had chopped down the trees and cleared up the land in question.

"This is all right," said Dick; "the only drawback is that there is no shelter for the horses."

"You can make a shed, covered by limbs and leaves from the trees," said Mark Morrison.

"That's so; we will do that to-morrow."

"We can blanket the horses to-night," said Bob.

Jack Thorp remained there until the youths had made the wood and started fires in all three cabins, and then bade them good-night and went back to his own cabin.

The youths made their horses as comfortable as was

and then entered the cabins and ate their suppers, having some cold meat and bread in the saddle-bags. Although he felt that they were pretty safe where they were, Dick did not neglect to take precautions against being surprised. He placed out sentinels, and then the rest of the youths lay down in the cabins and went to sleep.

CHAPTER X.

THE KIDNAPPING OF LAURA.

Next morning while the Liberty Boys were eating breakfast, the door of the cabin in which Dick Slater had taken his quarters was opened and suddenly Jack Thorp entered.

Dick saw that the wood-chopper was excited. "Good-evening, Mr. Thorp," he said; "what is the trouble?"

"Trouble enuff, Mr. Slater," was the reply (Dick had the wood-chopper his real name); "ye know ther Missus Tubbs, Missus Thorp, thet is ter be, hez er darter." Dick nodded.

"Yes, I know that," he said, "and a right nice girl she is."

"Yer right, Mister——"

"Call me Dick," interrupted the youth; "and I will call you Jack."

"All right, Dick. Waal, ye see, theer hez be'n er red-a-shinin' aroun' Laura fur er spell, an' he wanted her to ter New Brunswick with him, an' marry him."

"Ah! Did she consent, Jack?"

"No; ye see, she didn't like him; ther truth is, she likes a bung feller, ther son uv er nabor, an' so she told ther father thet she could not consent ter marry him."

"Exactly; well?"

"Waal, et made him mad, an' he swore thet ef he couldn't get her nobody else sh'd hev her; then he went erway. Thet yisterday; an' last night him an' three er four companions come ter ther widder's an' kidnapped Laura an' hid her erway."

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed Dick.

"Yes, I do; an' I wanten see ef ye wull help me ter get her back erg'in, Dick."

"You may be sure that we will help you get her back, Dick! We are at your disposal. Just as soon as we finish our breakfast we will be with you."

"Thank ye, Dick."

"That's all right; do you have any idea where the villains have taken her?"

"No; but I think I kin track 'em."

"I doubt it," said Dick. "They probably rode some distance on the highway, and the snow is so beaten down there that it would be impossible to track the rascals."

"Waal, we kin divide yer force up inter two parties, an'

one kin go up ther road an' ther other kin go down et, an' by watchin' close we kin see whar ther redcoats turned outen ther main road."

"That's a good idea," said Dick. "Well, we will be able to go right away."

He leaped up as he spoke and began donning his overcoat.

The other youths did the same, and soon all the Liberty Boys—with the exception of half a dozen that Dick told to stay at the cabins—were ready.

They bridled and saddled their horses and set out, Jack Thorp leading the way on foot. As they were traveling through thick timber he did not have any difficulty in keeping ahead of them.

When they arrived at the home of Mrs. Tubbs they found the widow in tears, but otherwise she seemed to have very good control of her feelings.

When she saw the Liberty Boys and Jack told her who they were and that they were going in search of her daughter she brightened up wonderfully.

"Oh, surely so many of you will be able to find my daughter and bring her back to me!" she exclaimed.

"We will find her if such a thing is possible, Mrs. Tubbs," said Dick.

They talked reassuringly to the widow while Jack Thorp was bridling a horse that belonged to the woman, and then all mounted and rode away.

"We'll bring Laura back with us," said Thorp, as they started.

"I hope so, Jack," was the reply.

They made their way to the road, and here they divided into two parties, one going up the road, the other down.

Bob Estabrook had charge of the party that went up the road, while Dick had command of the other. Jack Thorp accompanied Dick.

"Et's er guess, eether way, Dick," he said; "so I'll go erlong uv ye."

"Very good, Jack."

They rode onward, part of the force on one side of the road and part on the other. They watched the unbroken snow at the roadside for the purpose of discovering where the redcoats had turned aside, in case they had done so.

They had gone about three miles, when they saw where five horses had left the main road and entered the timber on the right-hand side.

"I'll bet thet is ther crowd we air after!" exclaimed Jack Thorp.

"We'll resk et, ennyhow, hey?"

"Yes; we will follow those tracks and see where they lead to."

The Liberty Boys turned aside and followed the tracks. Dick and Jack Thorp were in the lead, the others coming along in twos.

It was slow work, for they were going through heavy timber.

Finally they came to another road, and when Thorp saw it he said:

"I know whar I am now. This heer road jines ther other wun erbout two miles below heer. Ther rascals hev cut off ther trip down there an' back by cuttin' ercross."

"But where have they gone?" asked Dick.

"Thet's whut we've gotter fin' out. Let's look over onter ther other side of ther road an' see if they went inter ther timber erg'in."

This was done, but no tracks were to be found.

"They have gone up or down the road," said Dick.

"Then they've gone up ther road," said Thorp; "ef they hed be'n intendin' ter go down et they wouldn't hev come through ther timber so soon."

"You are right, I think," agreed Dick. "Well, we will go up the road."

They rode along, keeping a close watch on both sides of the road, and about half a mile from where they entered the road they found the tracks of five horses, where they had again entered the timber.

The members of the party turned aside and followed the tracks through the timber.

Suddenly Thorp's face lit up.

"I'll bet ennythin' I know whar they air headin' fur," he said.

"Is that so?" remarked Dick.

"Yas; thar's er empty cabin erbout er mile frum heer, an' I'll bet thet's whar ther raskils air goin'."

"They're there before this, likely," said Dick.

"Yas, thet's so."

They rode onward, and presently Thorp turned to Dick and said:

"Yender's ther clearin', an ther cabin is at ther further edge uv et."

"We had better dismount," said Dick. "We will be able to slip up on the cabin better afoot than on horseback."

The youths dismounted and tied their horses to trees.

Then they made their way to the edge of the clearing.

Here they dismounted and took a survey of the scene.

"I tole ye!" said Thorp; "d'ye see ther smoke comin' out uv ther chimney?"

"Yes," replied Dick; "ther cabin is certainly occupied."

"I hope we'll fin' ther people thar whut we're lookin' fur," said Thorp.

"I rather think that we shall do so."

Then Dick gave the order to advance, and the youths obeyed.

They made their way across the clearing and were soon at the cabin.

"Surround it!" ordered Dick, in a cautious voice.

The youths did so.

When this had been accomplished Dick stepped to the door and knocked upon it.

He had heard the low murmur of voices before knocking, but in an instant all was silence.

Dick waited a few moments and then knocked again.

This time he got a reply.

"Who's there?" a voice called out.

"Friends," replied Dick. "Open the door."

Dick heard the sound of whispering, and then steps approached the door.

A few moments later the door opened a little and a man's face appeared at the opening.

"Who are you and what do you want?" the man asked.

Dick noticed that the fellow had on a British uniform, so felt sure that the parties they were in search of were in the cabin.

"You might as well open the door," said Dick; "the cabin is surrounded by fifty men, and you cannot escape."

The redcoat looked past Dick, saw the Liberty Boys, realizing the truth of Dick's words, threw the door open.

"That is sensible," said Dick, approvingly.

Then he turned to Thorp, and asked:

"Is this the man we are looking for, Jack?"

"I think et is, Dick. I never seen 'im but onct I'm shore this is ther feller."

"What do you mean?" the redcoat asked. "Who are you looking for?"

"We are looking for a scoundrel who, assisted by others as villainous as himself, kidnapped the daughter of Widow Tubbs last night," was Dick's reply.

"Well, you have made a mistake in coming here. This is not the man you are looking for."

"That remains to be seen," coolly. "We are going to search the cabin."

The redcoat turned pale.

"You have no right——" he began, but Dick interrupted him.

"We have the might, and that amounts to the law of the land," he said, and he waved his hand toward the circle of Liberty Boys in a significant manner.

Then he summoned six of the youths and told them to shoot down any man who tried to leave the cabin.

"Come, Jack," he said, when the youths were with muskets in hand; "we will go in and search the cabin."

"All right, Dick; ye lead on, and I'll foller."

They entered the cabin and found four more redcoats sitting before the huge fireplace, in which was a roaring fire. And at the farther side of the fireplace, sitting on a bench, was a girl of seventeen or eighteen years.

"Thar's Laura!" cried Thorp; "these air ther villains who kidnapped her, shore enuff!"

A cry of joy had escaped the girl's lips the instant her eyes fell upon Jack Thorp and Dick.

"Saved!" she exclaimed. "Oh, I am so glad you have come!"

The five redcoats looked frightened and disconcerted.

They realized that they were trapped.

It would be useless to attempt to escape.

The house was surrounded, and if they were to make the attempt it would certainly result in their being killed or captured. The best thing to do would be to take their fate philosophically.

Dick hastened across to where the girl sat and cut the rope binding her arms.

Laura leaped up and gave utterance to a cry of satisfaction.

"Oh, it seems so good to know that I am free again!" she exclaimed.

Dick turned to Jack Thorp.

"What shall we do with these fellows, Jack?" he asked.

"I dunno, Dick," was the reply; "you're ther boss. "Do whatever ye wanter with 'em."

"All right; I'll make prisoners of them and take them Morristown and turn them over to General Washington."

"An' sarve 'em right, Dick."

"Yes, I think so myself."

Dick called some of the Liberty Boys into the cabin and told them to bind the arms of the five redcoats.

The youths obeyed, and a few minutes later the five snappers stood there prisoners.

"Wull, whut's next on ther program, Dick?" asked Thorp.

"I guess the next thing is to get back the way we came. Judge that Miss Laura will be glad to be traveling toward her home once more."

"Yes, indeed!" the girl exclaimed.

"Go get the horses belonging to those fellows," said Dick to some of the Liberty Boys; "we will start back at once."

The youths in question found the five horses belonging to the redcoats standing in a shed behind the cabin.

They brought the horses around, after bridling and saddling them, and the redcoats were brought forth from the bin and assisted into the saddles.

"Now, what are we to do?" said Dick. "There is no horse for Laura."

"She kin hev mine," said Thorp. "I kin walk back."

"She can ride in front of you," suggested Dick; "your horse will carry the double load easily."

"No; I will ride behind and hold on to Mr. Thorp," said Laura.

"That will be all right," said Dick. "Go and get your horse, Jack."

"All right."

Thorp hastened away, and at the expiration of ten minutes was back again.

Dick placed a blanket on the horse's back behind the saddle, and fastened it in such a manner that it would lay on. Then he lifted the girl to a place on the blanket.

"Now we're ready," said Dick; "let's be going."

"Hold tight, Laura," said Thorp.

"Don't fear for me," said the girl; "I won't fall off."

They set out, five of the Liberty Boys leading the five horses ridden by the prisoners.

When they came to where they had left their horses all the youths mounted, and then the journey was resumed.

They moved slowly until they reached the road, and where they would be able to make better time.

They had gone only a short distance, however, when a force of at least one hundred and fifty British troopers came riding around a bend in the road.

The instant the troopers caught sight of the Liberty Boys

they gave utterance to exultant shouts and urged their horses forward at a gallop.

CHAPTER XI.

A FIERCE FINISH.

"We will have to flee for our lives!" cried Dick; "abandon the prisoners!"

All whirled their horses and rode away in the other direction.

They urged their horses to their best gait, and went up the road with all possible speed.

Dick told Jack Thorp to get in the lead.

"Then we will accommodate the speed of our horses to that of yours," he said.

Thorp urged his horse forward, but he had gone only a little ways when a bullet struck the animal, causing it to stagger.

Dick happened to be right beside Thorp, and he reached out and, seizing the girl, lifted her to a place in front of him.

Thorp leaped to the ground and ran into the edge of the timber.

"I kin take keer of myself," he said; "go erhead an' don't let ther redcoats ketch ye."

"All right," called out Dick; "they shan't catch us if we can help it."

On the Liberty Boys rode.

After them came the British troopers.

The redcoats kept firing at the fugitives, and several of the Liberty Boys were wounded, though not seriously.

It was a lively chase.

"Do you think we will be able to escape, Dick?" asked Bob, his division having joined Dick's.

"I don't know," was the reply. "We will keep it up as long as we can, at any rate, we will hold out to the end."

"Yes, and if it comes to a finish fight we will make it a fierce one, Dick!"

"So we will!"

They returned the fire of the redcoats, and managed to drop one or two out of their saddles.

At last the youths came to the Raritan river.

As they came close to it they saw a party of redcoats skating along on the ice.

The British soldiers caught sight of the Liberty Boys at the same time that the youths caught sight of them.

The party of redcoats came skating rapidly across the ice, and succeeded in heading the Liberty Boys off.

A British officer seized the bridle of Dick's horse and leveled a pistol at the youth's head.

Although handicapped by having to hold the girl, Dick drew his sword and cut the officer down.

The other Liberty Boys now fired a volley, and this

caused such a scattering among the redcoats that the youths were enabled to urge their horses out on to the ice.

The pursuing redcoats did not dare fire, for fear of wounding some of the redcoats that had headed the Liberty Boys off.

This gave the patriot youths a chance to increase the distance between themselves and their pursuers somewhat, and they made the most of it. Their horses, being rough-shod, could make splendid headway on the ice, while the horses of the British troopers, being still on the road covered with deep snow, could not travel so fast.

When the redcoats reached the river, however, and rode out upon the ice the race became equal again.

On dashed pursued and pursuers.

The clatter of the hoofs on the ice sounded like muffled thunder.

When the patriot youths were within fifty yards of the river bank they heard the ice crack in an alarming manner. A glance showed that they were crossing a space that lay between two large airholes.

The ice sank considerable, but it did not give way, and the Liberty Boys got across in safety.

Not so the redcoats, however. The weight of the horses ridden by the Liberty Boys had weakened the ice to such an extent that when the main force of the British troopers and their horses got on the weakened spot it suddenly gave way, and down into the ice-cold water went horses and riders.

Of the hundred and fifty troopers at least one hundred went into the water, many of the horses and riders going under clear out of sight.

The Liberty Boys reached the bank and looked back just as the redcoats broke through and went into the water.

"Hurrah!" cried Sam; "if this isn't a fierce finish to a hard race, then I don't know what I am talking about!"

"You are right; it is a fierce finish," agreed Dick; "but it is more fierce for the redcoats than for us."

"That's so," said another of the Liberty Boys.

Then they rode onward.

"We will leave the redcoats to get out of their difficulty as best they may," said Dick.

The redcoats certainly were in trouble.

To break through the ice and be plunged in deep, ice-cold water, as had been the case with them, was a serious matter.

The fifty who had escaped the plunge did all they could to help their comrades to escape death by drowning. In spite of all they could do, however, forty of the troopers were drowned, and thirty-five of the horses also went down and came up no more.

And the sixty troopers who were saved came very near freezing to death. By the time fires could be built their clothes were frozen stiff.

The unhappy victims of the cold plunge finally got thawed out; but all idea of pursuing the rebels had been abandoned.

The disaster that had overtaken the British troops taken all the heart out of them.

As soon as they were in a condition to travel they mounted their horses and set out in the direction of New Brunswick. They had had all the experience they wanted in one day.

When Dick and the Liberty Boys abandoned the British prisoners at the beginning of the race, as has already been told, the troopers cut the bonds of the C when they came up with them, and the ex-prisoners E joined in the chase.

Two of them had gone down to death underneath the ice of the Raritan river, and one of the two was the fellow who had been instrumental in causing the kidnapping of Laura Tubbs. Thus she was rid of a dangerous enemy.

When the Liberty Boys arrived at the home of Mrs. Tubbs and she saw Laura seated in front of Dick, the good woman was almost wild with delight.

When Dick swung Laura down to the ground Mrs. Tubbs seized the girl in her arms and hugged and kissed her and wept happy tears over her.

"Oh, I thank ye, Mr. Tott"—Dick had not told the widow his real name, and she addressed him by the name he had used when there with Jack Thorp—"for what they've done for us, an' I hope that some day I may be able to repay ye."

"Oh, we don't want to be repaid, Mrs. Tubbs," said Dick. "We are very glad that we have been able to rely on you and Miss Laura's assistance, and the knowledge that we have done so is all the repayment we want."

"You are very kind, indeed. But where is Jack?" said the anxious look on her face.

"He will be along presently. His horse was shot, and he had to take to the timber on foot."

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yes; he is safe."

Then the youths dismounted and tied their horses and entered the house, the widow insisting that they should remain and take dinner at her house.

"Laura and me will cook ye the best dinner that we can kin git up," she promised, and the youths said they would enjoy eating a good dinner.

Jack Thorp put in an appearance half an hour later, and he was delighted to find that the youths had got through safely.

When Dick told him about the tragedy on the river, Thorp was well pleased, and said he hoped half the party of redcoats were drowned.

"We didn't wait to see whether or not that was the case," said Dick; "but there can be little doubt but what a number were drowned."

When dinner was ready the youths ate heartily, and they enjoyed the meal was evident.

Mrs. Tubbs was glad to see them eat, and when they praised her cooking she was as happy as a woman could be.

When dinner was over the youths mounted their horses and started out to hunt for more redcoats.

CHAPTER XII.

THE WEDDING.

"Wull ye come over ter Missus Tubbs' with me this evening, Mr. Slater?"

"Dick, Jack; don't call me Mr. Slater."

"Waal, Dick, then; wull ye come erlong with me?"

"Certainly; but what is going on?"

"Er weddin', Dick."

"What's that? Are you and the widow going to be married this evening?"

"Yas."

"Shake, Jack! I'm glad ter hear it!"

It was five o'clock in the evening, three days later than that on which occurred the events just narrated.

The Liberty Boys were in the three cabins and were getting ready to eat supper.

Jack Thorp had appeared at the cabin in which Dick Slater had his quarters, and after the greetings Thorp had spoken to Dick as given at the head of the chapter.

Then had ensued the conversation above given.

The youth and the big wood-chopper shook hands, and then Dick said:

"At what hour is the wedding to take place?"

"Eight o'clock."

"All right; when shall I come over to your cabin?"

"Erbout seven, I guess."

"Very well; I will be there."

"Say, I am coming, too," said Bob Estabrook; "you don't think I am going to be slighted, Jack."

"All right, come erlong," was the prompt response; "and I'm munny uv ye boys as wants ter kin come. We'll be d ter hev ye."

"Much obliged," said Dick; "but there won't be room for them in the house, you know, so it will be hardly worth while for them to come."

"We will send Dick and Bob as our representatives," said Mark Morrison.

After some further conversation Jack Thorp took his departure, and the youths fell to discussing the affair.

They decided that the two were sensible in getting married. In these troublous times the woman needed someone to protect herself and daughter, and the big wood-chopper would certainly be a good protector.

About half-past six o'clock Dick and Bob set out, and fifteen minutes later they arrived at the wood-chopper's cabin.

Jack and his three comrades were ready to go.

"Glad ter see ye," said Jack; "waal, come erlong; we'll goin'."

They set out at once.

Twenty minutes later they arrived at the home of the widow and were given a cordial welcome.

About twenty people, members of four families living in the vicinity, were there, and the preacher was also on

hand. He was what was called in those days a circuit-rider.

Promptly at eight o'clock Jack Thorp and Widow Tubbs took their stand in the middle of the room, and the preacher stood facing them.

The couple faced the front door, and the preacher's back was toward it.

Bible in hand, the preacher began the ceremony, but had spoken only a few words when there came the sharp report of a rifle. At the same instant was heard the breaking of glass, and Jack Thorp threw up his arms and fell forward upon his face on the floor, giving utterance to a stifled groan.

The widow and a number of the women and girls present screamed, and exclamations of surprise and horror escaped the lips of the men.

"Jack's dead!"

"Sumbuddy shot him!"

"Yas; they fired right through ther winder!"

"Hain't et orful!"

Such were a few of the exclamations.

Dick Slater, however, did not stop to give utterance to an exclamation; instead, he acted.

He leaped to the door, jerked it open and bounded out of doors, Bob following closely.

No one was in sight, and the youths ran around the house, with the expectation of seeing the would-be assassin. Their expectation was realized.

Thirty yards distant, and running with all his might, was a man.

"After him, Bob!" cried Dick. "We must catch the cowardly scoundrel!"

"So we must," agreed Bob; "and I believe that we can do so."

The Liberty Boys were swift runners.

They were gifted with great powers of endurance, as well.

They were capable of running at a good rate of speed for hours in succession, if the necessity arose.

It was only natural, then, that they should have faith in their ability to run the fugitive down.

They ran with all possible speed, and soon had the satisfaction of knowing that they were gaining.

"If he has killed Jack we will take him back, and the men there will hang him," said Bob.

"You are right, Bob; and I believe that they will hang him, sure enough."

The fugitive entered the timber now, and began trying to throw the youths off the track by dodging and doubling, but they were as expert as he, and easily kept on his track.

Closer and closer they drew to him.

Presently Dick called out:

"Stop! You can't escape!"

"Go to ther deuce!" came back, in snarling tones.

"That's where you are going!" returned Bob.

The chase went on, and the youths soon began closing

up the gap at a rapid rate. The fugitive was growing weary and could not keep up the pace.

"You might as well stop!" said Dick. "We have you; you cannot escape."

The man struggled onward a short distance, and then, hearing the footsteps of the youths close behind him, he stopped and turned so as to face his pursuers.

Dick recognized the man, the bright starlight and the snow on the ground making it light enough so that it was possible to see with tolerable distinctness.

"Jim Boggs!" he exclaimed. "I thought so!"

"Yas, et's Jim Boggs," was the snarling reply; "and I'll—"

He made a motion as though to draw a weapon, but the youths had their pistols out so quickly that the man thought better of it, and did not do more than start to make the attempt.

"You are sensible in giving up the idea of trying to draw and use a weapon," said Dick; "we could and would fill you full of lead before you could get in a position to do us any damage."

"Whut ye want with me?" sullenly.

"We want you to go back to the house with us."

"Back ter whut house?"

"You know well enough; Mrs. Tubbs' house."

"W'y sh'd I go thar?"

"There is no use in you trying to play innocent," said Dick, sternly; "we know that you are the fellow who shot Jack Thorp just now, and you must go back with us. If he is dead you will be strung up to the nearest tree, without doubt."

Boggs would have started to run had he dared; but with the pistols staring him in the face he did not have the courage to do it. All he could do was to stand and stare at the youths in sullen rage.

"Tie his arms, Bob," said Dick. "If he attempts to resist I will put a bullet through him."

"All right, Dick."

Bob replaced his pistol in his belt and drew a handkerchief from his pocket and tied the hands of Jim Boggs.

Then Dick replaced his pistol in his belt, and each of the youths took hold of an arm and marched Boggs along between them.

Fifteen minutes later they arrived at the cabin.

They entered, and were delighted to see Jack Thorp sitting up. He was pale, and his head was bandaged; but he did not seem to be seriously wounded.

When the youths entered with the prisoner between them, exclamations of delight and satisfaction escaped the lips of those present.

"So you caught him, did you?"

"Et's Jim Boggs!"

"Thet's who I guessed et wuz!"

"He wuz mad becos Jack got erhead uv 'im!"

"I didn't think he was mean ernough ter try ter comit murder."

Such were a few of the exclamations.

Dick advanced and took Thorp's hand.

"Jove, but I'm glad to see you alive, Jack!" he earnestly. "I feared the scoundrel had killed you."

"He jes' creased me, Dick," was the reply; "et me insenserbile fur a few moments, thet is all. I'm right now."

Boggs looked disappointed, and then a look of came and displaced the other expression. He would not doubt been glad to know that Thorp was dead. Now that he was a prisoner, and it was known to men that he shot Jack, he was glad that the shot had been fatal.

"They'd hev hung me up ter er tree, shore," he himself.

He was not sure that they could prove that he had the shot, however, and he decided to deny having done so.

When Thorp looked at him and asked him why he tried to murder him, Boggs sullenly denied having any such attempt.

"Oh, that is folly," said Dick. "You will make ing by denying having done the shooting, Boggs. We were running away from the house when we first saw and that is proof sufficient that you did it."

"But I didn't do et," growled Boggs.

"Bah, ye know ye did, Jim," said Thorp; "but I didn't kill nur hurt me very much, I'm willin' ter be kasy on ye. I'm goin' ter make ye stay heer an' see Mrs. Tubbs an' me married; arter thet ye kin go."

"That will be letting him off too easy, Jack," said Estabrook. "You want to give him some punishment will serve as a warning to him to not try anything in the way of shooting people down."

"Ye shet yer mouth!" growled Boggs, glaring at "whut is et ter ye?"

"A good deal. I nearly ran my legs off catching and I want to see you punished some, anyhow."

"Waal, we'll see about thet arter ther ceremony. Preacher, air ye retty ter tie us up now?"

The preacher replied that he was, and so Thorp and the widow again took their places in the middle of the room, and the ceremony was performed. This time there was no interruption.

Boggs looked on in sullen silence; if looks could kill Thorp would have dropped dead.

When the ceremony was finished Thorp kissed his wife and then turned to the men, and said:

"Now, whut shall we do with Jim?"

"Let's tie 'im ter er tree an' give 'im er lickin' er hickory switches," said one.

The others fell in love with this idea at once, and so the ceremony was conducted out of doors to a tree, to which Boggs was bound, his face toward it.

One of the men had cut some switches while the ceremony was being done, and now they took turns in laying the switches on the squirming villain.

He threatened what he would do, but the men

tention to his words. They gave him a good whipping then untied him and turned him loose. "So erway, an' don' never come foolin' aroun' erg'in!" the warning words given him.

ggs muttered something unintelligible, and then strode

the men entered the house, and a few minutes later the guests were seated at the table, eating the splendid repast that the widow and her daughter Laura had prepared for the occasion.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ENCOUNTER AT THE CABINS.

The Liberty Boys were very busy the next two or three

they went riding around the country hunting for foraging bands of British, and in many cases they succeeded in finding what they were looking for.

They struck the enemy a number of severe blows, and the British so enraged that the order was given to cut the party of rebels down and either kill or capture

at this end several large forces, comparatively speaking, were sent out in search of the Liberty Boys.

The youths were not long in learning that a determined effort was being made to hunt them down and capture

"We could retreat to Morristown and be safe, if we decided to do so," said Dick, while talking of the matter one evening; "but I don't feel like running

"Neither do I, Dick," from Bob; "let's stay here; let's fight it out to the end."

The other youths were in favor of doing this, and Dick decided that they would remain where they were and keep striking the small parties of redcoats blows just as long as was possible to do so.

The British spy, George Harbison, who had tried to lure Dick when they rode into New Brunswick in company, and who failed and was so disappointed, was desirous of getting revenge on the youth, so he went with one of the forces that was sent out to search for the Liberty Boys. He was a good scout and spy, and he made up his mind that he would find the hiding-place or rendezvous of the rebels, if such a thing was possible.

As soon as the force in question had reached the vicinity of the scene of numerous encounters between small parties of British and the Liberty Boys, he started out to search for the rendezvous of the rebels.

He spent an entire afternoon and was not successful.

He went out and was gone three or four hours after dark, but returned unsuccessful.

He was not discouraged, however; he made up his mind

that he would persevere, and that he would succeed sooner or later.

Next day he worked hard, but till supper time he had not succeeded.

After supper he started out again, and this time he happened to go in the direction of the three log cabins on the bank of the Raritan river.

He had been making his way along an hour or more, and of a sudden he discovered the presence of the three cabins, which were in such a thick clump of trees that one had to almost stumble upon them before they could be seen.

Lights were shining through the windows, and the sound of voices came to Harbison's ears, and he leaped to the conclusion at once that he had found what he was looking for.

"This is the rendezvous or headquarters of the rebels, I am positive," he told himself.

He stole forward with all the caution possible.

Suddenly he paused.

He had caught sight of a sentinel's form, it being outlined against the window in one of the cabins.

Harbison paused only a few moments. Then he began stealing away, and by making a half-circuit he managed to get around and past the sentinel.

He stole around behind one of the cabins, and placing his ear to a crack between two logs, listened.

He heard enough to satisfy him that the inmates of the cabin were the Liberty Boys, and he was delighted.

"Now we will get them," he told himself, exultingly. "We will come here, surround the cabins, and cut off their escape, and they will have to surrender."

He made his way along the side of the cabin, and finally found a peephole, through which he got a view of a portion of the interior of the cabin.

He saw the Liberty Boys, and now he knew that he was right, that he had found the daring young rebels that the British were searching for.

He did not remain much longer.

He had seen and learned all that was necessary.

The rebels were here, and now the thing for him to do was to get back to the British encampment with the information.

He stole softly away.

He managed to get past the sentinels, and then he hastened his footsteps.

He was eager to get to the camp with the good news.

He was back at the encampment at the end of an hour of rapid walking, and he went at once to the tent occupied by the commander.

"I've found the rebels, Colonel Hampton!" he exclaimed, as soon as he had saluted.

"Ah, indeed!" exclaimed the colonel; "where are they?"

"About a two-hour march from here, sir."

"Good! We will break camp and get started at the earliest possible moment."

"I judged that that was what you would wish to do."

"Yes; which direction from here are they?"

"Nearly north. They are occupying three old cabins on the bank of the Raritan."

"That is good; we will surround the cabins and have the rebels right in their own traps."

"True, sir."

The colonel then sent out orders for the soldiers to get ready to break camp and march away, and the soldiers grumblingly obeyed.

They did not like the idea of starting on a march in the night time, and in such cold weather.

When they learned that the rendezvous of the rebels had been found, however, and that it was probable that they would succeed in capturing the Liberty Boys, the soldiers were more cheerful. If they succeeded they would then get to return to New Brunswick, where they had fairly comfortable quarters and better food to eat.

When they were ready they set out.

They marched along slowly and steadily, Harbison in the lead as guide.

It had taken one hour to reach the vicinity of the three cabins; but it took the force of soldiers more than two hours. It was much slower work and much more difficult for a large body of men to make its way through the thick timber than for one man to do so.

They arrived in the vicinity of the cabins finally, however, and Harbison went ahead to reconnoiter.

He stole forward slowly and cautiously.

He was soon where he could see the lights shining through the cabin windows.

He paused and tried to locate one of the sentinels, so as to make it safe for himself to advance nearer the cabins.

He did not see any sign of a sentinel, so he moved slowly and cautiously forward.

As he drew near the cabins he noted that there was no sound of voices; but he did not think much about this. It was now nearly ten o'clock, and it was only natural to suppose that the inmates of the cabins were asleep.

What Harbison could not understand, however, was the fact that no sentinels were stationed.

He did not yet suspect the truth—that the cabins were empty; but he quickly learned that such was the case when he went around to the rear of the middle cabin and peered in through a crack.

The cabin was empty!

The fire was roaring on the hearth, but no human being was in the room.

Harbison was dumfounded.

He did not know what to think.

Where had the rebels gone, and why?

He hastened to one of the other two cabins and looked in. It was empty, also. He was not surprised, however. He had expected that it would be.

He then went to the remaining cabin and looked in.

Like the other two, this one was empty.

Then Harbison went to the sheds where the horses had been and found them missing.

"They have escaped," muttered the British spy, bitterly. He could not think how this had come about.

It seemed evident that the rebels had learned that they were to be attacked. But how had they learned it?

That was the question.

It did not matter much, however. The fact that the rebels had escaped was all-sufficient.

Harbison made his way back to where the British soldiers were awaiting his return, and when he told Colonel Hampton that the rebels had disappeared that officer was as greatly disappointed as had been the case with the spy.

"They must have gained knowledge of our coming," said the colonel.

"Yes; but I don't understand how they managed to do so."

"Perhaps they saw you when you were spying on them, and took the alarm and fled as soon as you were gone."

"That is possible, but I would have thought that they would have made an effort to capture me if they had known that I was spying on them."

"That would seem to be a reasonable supposition. Still, they might have thought that the better way was to let you go away and then slip away themselves."

"That is evidently what they did think."

Then the colonel gave the order for the soldiers to advance, and they did so.

They were soon at the cabins; and when a couple of reconnoitering parties had reported that there was no enemy anywhere in the vicinity the redcoats entered the cabins and settled down to spend the night.

"Well, we have secured more comfortable quarters than we had before," said the colonel, as he warmed himself in front of the fireplace, "and that is something."

"True," agreed Harbison; "but I wanted that we should capture Dick Slater and his gang of Liberty Boys."

"Oh, we will capture them sooner or later," was the confident reply.

"I hope so."

But this was to be a more difficult matter than the worthy colonel thought.

He was dealing with a pair of as shrewd young fellows as could have been found in a year's search, and he would have to get up very early indeed to catch them napping.

CHAPTER XIV.

DEALING THE BRITISH A BLOW.

Colonel Hampton and Harbison, the spy, were right; the Liberty Boys had been warned of the coming of the British force.

The redcoats had passed the Tubbs home in coming, and Laura had seen them as they went by.

She had told her mother about it, and Mrs. Thorp—what was her name now—had at once jumped to the conclusion that the redcoats were heading for the cabins where the Liberty Boys were staying.

"I wish Jack wuz here," she said.

"Won't he be home before long, mother?"

"I am afraid not, Laura; he said he might be away till after midnight."

"You want to warn the Liberty Boys, mother?"

"Yes; but I don't see how we kin do et now."

The girl's face lighted up.

"I'll do it," she said.

"You hain't afraid ter go so far all by yourself, Laura?"

"No; I am not afraid."

"But kin ye git there ahead of ther redcoats?"

"Oh, yes, easily. The soldiers march slowly, you know, and I can go fast."

"Well, run along, then, and warn the Liberty Boys of their danger."

The girl put on her wraps hastily, kissed her mother, and then left the house and hastened away through the timber.

She knew the way, for she had been to the cabins once, several months before.

She made all possible speed, and succeeded in reaching the cabins while the redcoats were yet a mile and a half way.

She knocked on the door of the middle cabin and it was opened by one of the Liberty Boys, who stared in surprise when he saw a girl standing there.

"Come in," he invited, hastily. "You must be cold, Miss."

"Not very, sir," as she entered. "I came rapidly and am quite comfortable. Is Mr. Slater here?"

"Yes, Miss Tubbs," said Dick, leaping up and advancing with outstretched hand. "What is the trouble? What has happened?"

It was only natural that Dick should think that something unusual had occurred.

"I have come to warn you," was the reply. "The British know you are here, I am sure, for they are not more than a mile and a half from here and are coming in this direction."

"We must decide what to do at once," said Dick to Bob, who stood near.

"How many men have they, do you think, Miss Laura?" asked Bob.

"There must be at least three hundred," was the reply.

"That is too strong a force for us to fight against," said Dick.

"Yes, so it is," said Mark Morrison.

Then they decided to slip away at once and avoid having to fight the redcoats.

They disliked to run, but they were sensitive youths, and that when the odds were so great against them it would be folly to stay there and try to offer fight.

So they quietly left the cabin, bridled and saddled their horses and mounted and rode away.

They did not go far, however. When they were a mile away Dick called a halt.

"I have a scheme," he said.

"What is it?" asked Bob.

"My idea is that the British, when they get to the cabins and find us gone, will stop and go into camp there. The cabins are large, and the three will hold the three hundred soldiers, though it will be rather crowded."

"And what then?"

"Why, we will slip back some time after midnight and make an attack on them."

Bob and the other youths thought that this would be a good plan; and said so.

So they remained where they were until midnight, and then, leaving their horses tied to trees, they stole back to the cabins.

There were sentinels out, of course; but the youths succeeded in making prisoners of them without letting them give the alarm.

Then they decided to set the cabins on fire and force the redcoats to come forth, when they would fire upon them and inflict a lot of damage.

A little later the cabins were burning briskly, and the inmates would necessarily be aroused and would come forth to escape being burned.

Suddenly the doors of the cabins opened and the redcoats came rushing forth.

The Liberty Boys opened fire.

Crack, crack, crack, crack!

The British were taken by surprise and at a disadvantage.

They had been aroused from their sleep by the flames, and had leaped up and rushed out without taking time to ask themselves what it meant or how the cabins got on fire.

Now, however, they knew.

The cabins had been set on fire by the rebels.

The British were in no condition to stop and make a fight.

A few of them had presence of mind sufficient so that they fired their muskets as they dashed into the timber; but about half their number had forgotten their muskets in their hurry and had left the weapons in the cabins.

The Liberty Boys were busy.

They had a chance to do damage, and they were disposed to make the most of it.

Therefore they fired their muskets and then drew their pistols and fired them.

When they had discharged all their weapons the youths clubbed their muskets and knocked down the redcoats as they came running past.

In this way they downed quite a number.

At last the redcoats had disappeared, save those who had gone down under shots or blows from the musket-butts, however, and the youths had time to get their breath and look around them a bit.

Bob wanted to pursue the fleeing redcoats, but Dick said no, that it would be best and safest to let them go.

"They outnumber us greatly, even yet," he said; "and they might turn on us and make us trouble. Let them go; we have done well enough as it is."

"I guess you are right. Although we have been hunted for and chased around more or less by parties of redcoats, we have held our own, have held out well."

"So we have."

"And now this is what I would call a fierce finish, Dick."

"Yes, if it is the finish."

"Well, this night's work will make the British so angry that they will force us to retreat, or will capture us; don't you think so?"

"They will certainly make extraordinary efforts to do so."

Then they took a survey of the scene.

They found that they had killed seventeen of the redcoats and had wounded twenty-seven.

Of the latter ten were dangerously injured, the rest not being in any great danger of losing their lives as a result of their injuries.

One of the cabins was not burning so briskly as the other two, and Dick told the youths to see if they could extinguish the fire.

"If so, we will put the wounded redcoats in there," he said. "They will freeze to death if left out here in the cold."

The youths went to work, and after a hard fight they managed to put the fire out and saved the cabin.

The wounded redcoats were then carried into the cabin and made as comfortable as possible.

While this was being done Dick had sentinels out, of course, for he did not know but the redcoats might come back at any moment and make an attack on his Liberty Boys.

The other cabins were still blazing fiercely.

The youths now held a council.

The question to be decided was: What should they do?

They decided to hold out to the end. In other words, they made up their minds to stay until forced to retreat.

They went back to where they had left their horses, and untying the animals, led them away.

They went a mile or so and then went into camp.

They built some campfires and made themselves as comfortable as possible, and when morning came they ate breakfast and got ready for a lively day's work.

It was impracticable to try to make a stand against overwhelming odds, and so the youths mounted their horses and rode away in the direction of Morristown Heights.

They went slowly, for they did not wish to go any farther than was necessary.

The British foot soldiers finally stopped and turned back. But there was a force of three hundred troopers that kept on coming, and the Liberty Boys kept retreating, with the

result that they finally decided to go clear to Morristown and remain awhile, till things got settled down.

Having come to this decision, the youths rode away at a gallop and arrived at their destination an hour before sundown.

Dick went to General Washington's headquarters as soon as they arrived on the Heights, and made his report.

The commander-in-chief told the youth that he had done well, and complimented him.

"You had better remain here awhile until things get quieted down," he said; "if you go back to the work the British may succeed in capturing you, or in killing the majority of your Liberty Boys."

Dick said that he would remain in camp awhile, and then saluted and took his departure, feeling very well satisfied.

Our story is practically ended.

Two weeks later the Liberty Boys went to the home of Bill Burdock, and found Tom Farrell and Charlie Chisholm very well and able to sit in the saddle again. Charlie had won the love of Susie Burdock, but Tom, while disappointed, was honorable, generous and magnanimous, and his friendship for his comrade was not broken.

When the war ended Charlie and Susie were married.

Sophia Morgan, the tavern girl who had aided Dick by giving him food and information the time he was in New Brunswick, lived not far from Morristown, and she came home to stay, and Tom Farrell made her acquaintance while out on a trip with the Liberty Boys, fell in love with her and married her at the close of the war.

Laura Tubbs was married to the young man who had been courting her for a couple of years past. His name was Dave Belden.

George Harbison, the British spy, was one of those who had been wounded by the Liberty Boys the night the three cabins were set on fire, and his wound was so serious that he succumbed to it and died.

Jim Boggs, the man who had been a rival for the hand of Widow Tubbs, was killed in a drunken brawl by one of the members of his wood-chopping gang.

Jack Thorp and his wife lived happily, and the ex-widow never had cause to regret that Dick Slater had won her husband for her by thrashing Jim Boggs.

THE END.

The next number (173) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS AT FORT POCONO; or, THE BATTLE OF POCONO MOUNTAIN," by Harry Moore.

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